

RE-MAPPING HISPANIOLA: HAITI IN DOMINICAN AND DOMINICAN
AMERICAN LITERATURE

By

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Dedicated to my three *Mars*: My Dominican *ahijadas*, Marializ and Marisol, and my own
sweet Marcela

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INTRODUCTION

Now let them say that we have no borders.
Rafael Leónidas Trujillo¹

This dissertation primarily explores how various twentieth- and twenty-first century Dominican, Dominican American, and Latin American writers have elected to present Haitians not as the primitive Other, as the majority of works of this time frame do, but instead as neighbors; friends; commiserates; and important, integrated members of a broader Dominican community. The literary texts I have selected un-silence Hispaniola's tragic past and re-write and shine new light on the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic.² Literature, as opposed to history, anthropology, and other fields of study, plays a unique role in uncovering the muted moments in the past by providing readers with alternative approaches to historic events. The authors considered in the chapters to follow re-write Haiti by giving new voice(s) to the Haitian-Dominican tensions of the past, whether referring to the Haitian Massacre of 1937,³ the Haitian Occupation of Santo Domingo (1822-44), or other important events that cast a gloomy

¹ Following the 1937 Haitian Massacre, Trujillo reportedly spoke these words to a subordinate, referencing the "successful" policing of the Dominican frontier (Lee Turtis 165).

² At the mention of "literary texts," it should be noted that the primary texts analyzed in the four chapters of the dissertation represent only novel and memoir. My decision to focus on these genres not only helps to center the scope of the project, but it also moves away from the prioritization of poetry common in Latin America (an emphasis also reflected in the Dominican literary tradition) and recognizes the value and rich content of Dominican and Dominican American non-poetic works.

³ The Haitian Massacre of 1937, examined in greater detail in Chapters Two and Three, refers to the massacre of over 20,000 Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent. The genocide is commonly referred to as the Parsley Massacre or *El Corte* and took place over a three-day period in October of 1937, mainly in the border region (largely sugar plantations) surrounding Dajabón, Dominican Republic.

shadow over the history of Hispaniola. Not only do the works I examine in my dissertation refuse to let the past disappear or let history establish itself as one-sided and biased to power structures, but they offer readers new ways of understanding what many believe can only be gleaned from historical texts, in this way challenging the dominant narratives. An analysis of the selected works lends new meaning to the Haitian subject as historically defined in the Dominican Republic and Latin America at-large. The critical approach also re-positions both Haiti and the Dominican Republic on a metaphorical *and* physical map of Hispaniola and offers via literary analysis – approached with a critical lens rooted in border studies – a geographic understanding of the Island that de-emphasizes the border as a cultural, racial/ethnic, and spiritual signifier (a line of demarcation between “us” and “them”), instead focusing on points of contact and camaraderie between the two sister countries.

With Hispaniola’s tragic and oftentimes silenced past and present in mind, the present dissertation aims to highlight the solidarity between the two countries and their people, bringing to the forefront literature in which the representation of the Haitian subject transcends the primitive inferior or racial Other. This project aspires to reassess the history of Dominican-Haitian relations by focusing on a common historical and cultural heritage that is negated or neglected by many. Although acknowledgement of an alternate, oftentimes silenced history of Hispaniola in literature allows for the recognition of a Haitian-Dominican relationship defined by interdependence and, at times, camaraderie, this is not to say that animosity between the two countries and, furthermore, a deep-seated hatred does not exist. It would prove impossible to negate the anti-Haitian sentiment in Dominican national thought. The works of Dominican nationalists Joaquín

Balaguer and Manuel A. Peña Batlle, among others, provide evidence of such *antihaitianismo*. Further, anti-Haitian sentiment surfaces in certain texts written by Dominicans whose works are examined in this dissertation's second chapter such as Ramón Marrero Aristy and Freddy Prestol Castillo.⁴

The chapters to follow provide literary evidence demonstrating the varied attitudes Dominicans harbor toward Haiti and Haitians, pointing to, as Samuel Martínez does, “the complex weave of mutual fascination and repulsion, attraction and dislike, respect and fear” in which the two countries are bound (84). Furthermore, the project highlights the Dominican and Dominican American born writers who have consciously elected to cast a positive light upon their Haitian brothers and sisters, often reflected in a commiseration with Haitians or a clear recognition of the catastrophic misfortunes experienced by the Haitian population on the island of Hispaniola. These writers and their works are of interest to me as they represent the previously muted understanding of the Haitian-Dominican relationship. The silencing of this alternate history is, in large part, owed to Rafael Leónidas Trujillo (the infamous Dominican dictator in power from 1930-61) and the stronghold of *trujillato* ideology following the General's assassination. The reverberations of nationalist, racist Dominican thought bolstered during the Trujillo

⁴ The term “anti-haitianism,” or *antihatianismo* in Spanish, referring to anti-Haitian nationalist sentiment, needs to be contextualized historically to understand its use in the following chapters. Lauren Derby clarifies in her 1994 study: “Anti-Haitianism must be understood as more than racism as such. It arose initially as consciousness of colonial difference, an identity marked first by language (French versus Spanish; the import of the linguistic ascription of alterity still lingers today), then by a series of derivative collective assertions of differences originating in colonial rivalries between the French and the Spanish. Anti-Haitianism's second layer of meaning stemmed from Saint Domingue's (which later became Haiti) former economic supremacy and colonial grandeur, in stark contrast to the poverty of the Spanish colony” (495). In a broader scope, I also use the term “negrophobia” to refer to anti-Black sentiment.

regime have resurfaced in contemporary Dominican society with the recent Dominican Tribunal Court Ruling (0168-13).⁵

I am not interested in categorizing the literary works examined in this project as altruistic for the ways in which they represent Haiti and Haitians, nor do I desire to enter into a philosophical or religious debate regarding the significance behind the positive approach to the western half of Hispaniola in such texts. Instead, I hope to show that the representation of Haitians in Dominican and Dominican American literature is increasingly varied, especially as the literary works are anchored in the past in an attempt to illustrate how political powers throughout the history of Hispaniola have deformed, restrained, and suppressed the Haitian subject. Dominican American authors, for example, are influenced by various potential factors that help to explain their yearning to re-envision Hispaniola and position Haitians as more than the racial Other. Such factors include US politics and equality laws; a geographic distance from the homeland that allows them to form different perspectives on historical events; and a desire to forge a distinctive identity as “hyphenated” subjects, as Gustavo Pérez Firmat suggests in *Life on the Hyphen*.

The present project clarifies that, despite the apparently unmitigated *negrophobia* and anti-Haitianism in the Dominican Republic, it is nevertheless possible to encounter a balanced representation of Haiti and its people in writing by Dominican and Dominican

⁵ With this sentence, the Dominican Tribunal Court stripped the citizenship of Haitian-Dominicans registered legally in the country. The *sentencia* revokes the citizenship of all Dominicans born to undocumented parents after 1929. As the average life span is 73 in the Dominican Republic, compared to 49 in Haiti, the sentence does not “grandfather out” many individuals, if any at all. Thus, an estimated 200,000 Dominicans of Haitian descent are rendered stateless by the Ruling. The institutionalized racism inherent in Ruling 0168-13 is an eerie reminder of the troubled history between the two countries.

American writers. Or rather, literature does not only reflect the dominant discourse and hegemonic power structures, but also provides readers with a counter-discourse. Counter-discourses, like those acknowledging the linkages of the past and present between two neighboring countries, problematize the dominant ideologies and lead readers toward an alternate understanding of Hispaniola's past. Although this phobia and anti-Haitian sentiment found new strength during the era of Trujillo, the roots of such race-based discrimination reach far back to Hispaniola's early colonial history. The *antihaitianismo* of the mid-nineteenth century, for example, became increasingly widespread as the Dominican population sought to distinguish themselves from their Haitian neighbors in order to promote nationalism and also to counter attempts of the Haitians to recover their former territory.⁶ The Dominican and Dominican American writers examined here write against this dominant national ideology; they re-envision Hispaniola, its history, and the relationship between the two countries comprising the Caribbean isle; they write against the past to un-silence the forgotten actors and events in an oftentimes one-sided (trans)-national history.

I will highlight the aforementioned balanced and more historically accurate perception of the Haitian subject – one that contemporary critics like Sibylle Fischer and Emilio Jorge Rodríguez have overlooked – through an analysis of literary texts.⁷ The

⁶ The Haitian Occupation (also known as the Haitian Domination) took place from 1822-44. The majority of Dominicans did not object to the Occupation during this time. It was primarily the Dominican elites who voiced their opposition to the twenty-year period of Haitian rule. See Frank Moya Pons' *La dominación haitiana*.

⁷ Fischer's 2004 study is concerned with the repercussions of the slave revolt in Haiti in the New World, but focuses mainly on Cuban literature, as does E.J. Rodríguez's *Haiti and Trans-Caribbean Literary Identity*. Elzbieta Sklodowska's *Espectros y espejismos: Haití en el imaginario cubano*, likewise, is primarily concerned with the representation of Haiti in Cuba.

Dominican and Dominican American works I have identified as primary, despite the silences imposed by the government-supported national ideology in which the Dominican national Self is defined in its division and distancing of itself from the foreign Other, give retrospective significance to the spectrum of ways to view Haiti and Haitians both *on* and *off* the island. As such, the dissertation is divided into four chapters. The first chapter centers on three twentieth century Latin American texts with a primary focus on the island of Hispaniola, emphasizing an interest in the history of the Island that goes beyond the insular literary production. The inclusion of these texts helps to situate Haiti within a trans-Caribbean, as well as trans-Latin American context, taking into account the literary identity of the island of Hispaniola as proposed by Caribbean and Latin American writers and moving away from a singular, intra-island perspective. Chapter Two critically approaches two twentieth-century Dominican novels written during Trujillo's thirty-one year reign with a clear interest in the representation of Haitians, while also exploring pro-Trujillo texts written by the same authors. The third chapter looks at Dominican literature written and published after 1961, the year of Trujillo's assassination, and is primarily focused on the literary production of Marcio Veloz Maggiolo. The fourth and final chapter is concerned with the re-writing of the past and the re-visioning of the Haitian subject in Latino/a literature, namely in the works of Julia Alvarez, Junot Díaz, Raquel Cepeda, and Loida Maritza Pérez.⁸

The aim of the current project – achieved by considering how certain literary texts offer an alternative to the dominant Dominican discourse in regard to anti-Haitian ideology

⁸ My choice to use the term “Latino/a” as opposed to “Latino,” “Latinx,” or “Latin@” is to include all genders when applying the label to refer to individuals (as the latter two terms also do). A further discussion of the term “Latino/a” and its complicated meaning – as different from “Hispanic” – is in the fourth chapter of this dissertation.

– is to re-position Haiti on the literary map of the Dominican Republic and beyond, challenging the physical space of the border and its history of blurred lines. The demarcation of the Dominican-Haitian borderline loses significance as literature produces a cultural politics of diversity and inclusion, forging a new map of Hispaniola that softens or diminishes the historical delineation of a border used to denote a boundary-line between two “enemy” nations. The use of border theory as key to approaching the literary works, alternatively representing the Haitian subject, recognizes the border as both cultural signifier and analytic tool and reflects on the important work of Gloria Anzaldúa and her Borderlands theory.⁹ While the majority of border theory written in the United States is concerned primarily with the US-Mexico border, the geographical and ideological dimensions of these studies apply to the Dominican-Haitian border as well.¹⁰ Anzaldúa declares ideological Borders exist anywhere, and it is this less visible border that I determine is broken down by the literary works examined in this dissertation. While the two nations comprising Hispaniola are defined by a physical border, the relative permanency of this geographical border is overshadowed by the ability of the writer to shift, erase, and re-draw another type of border – an ideological Border – that historically has drawn apart Haitians and Dominicans. An ideological Border, or “soft” border, also allows for a metaphorical understanding of a borderland(s), building on a flexible

⁹ *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) is a semi-autobiographical poetic-theoretical text that defies genre and discipline. The work theorizes the Mexican-U.S. border and defines the existence and growth of a “New Mestiza consciousness” that seeks to represent the experience of border subjects or *fronterizos*. Anzaldúa describes the border shared between the United States and Mexico as “una herida abierta,” asserting that it is from this wound that a third world, a “border culture,” is created and sustained.

¹⁰ Anzaldúa distinguishes between ideological and geographical borders in her writing by marking geographical borders with a lowercase “b” and ideological ones with an uppercase “B.”

understanding of the Dominican-Haitian (singular) border that produces other borders: social, racial, religious, cultural, and otherwise.

I use Anzaldúa's border theory, centered on the ideological Border, to re-focus the Dominican Republic-Haiti argument by deciphering how literature re-writes Hispaniola's history and resists the dominant, patriarchal discourse surrounding Dominican culture and identity. I also look to Néstor García Canclini's conception of borders as markedly repressive, the site of both the separation and connection between two sides. I am not interested in "border writing" when referring to the study and theorization of borders, but instead in how writing bestows new meaning upon ideological Borders – the "Border" as the limit between in and out, self and Other, Dominican and Haitian. In this sense, the literature analyzed here does not lead to the creation of a "third country," but instead to a new understanding of two separate countries and their whole.

Michel Foucault's "Of Other Spaces," with a primary focus on his definition of heterotopias, serves as a useful theoretical backbone to explore both physical/geographical borders and ideological ones.¹¹ While Foucault is not generally considered a border theorist, the connection(s) between frontiers and power structures is undeniable and a detailing of the crossroads of power at the Dominican-Haitian border, with a Foucauldian notion of discourse, proves useful. For the purposes of the present study, Hispaniola constitutes a heterotopic entity in the sense it represents a space where Otherness prevails, a space that functions in relation to other spaces – most specifically

¹¹ Esther Cuesta, in her article "A modo de testimoniar: Borderlands, Papeles, and U.S. Academia," links Anzaldúa to Foucault by a common question serving as a foundation for both of their works: the relationship between power and knowledge. Cuesta further notes, "Anzaldúa is, like Foucault, an archeologist of knowledge. She digs for ideas, symbols, and myths in her own historic and mythic past" (166).

Haiti and the Dominican Republic, but also the Caribbean, Latin America, and the broader diaspora. In reference to Foucault's delineated traits of a heterotopia, the notion that such a space has multiple layers of meaning helps to illustrate why many writers – even those positioned outside of Hispaniola – are drawn to the Island and its unique history. Moreover, the ability of heterotopias to exist “without geographical markers” (25) speaks to Hispaniola's border; this line appears erased or blurred as Dominican, Dominican American, and other Latin American authors elect to re-write and correct the Island's history, re-envisioning the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic and Hispaniola and the world. In this way, the island of Hispaniola, too, constitutes a space that exists and thrives “without geographical markers.”

If one were to plot points on a map to illustrate where the primary texts analyzed in this dissertation project are set, as well as the country from which they were written and published, the map's optical focus would zoom out far beyond Hispaniola. If one imagines, then, the two points on the map representative of each work (setting and author origin) connected by a thin line, all texts would share an anchor – by at least one of the two points – to the island of Hispaniola. The imaginary “literary lines” cross oceans, landforms, and political and geographical borders. The authors whose works are analyzed in the following chapters figuratively cross borders by uniting them in narrative, creating a criss-cross of various borderlines, stressing Hispaniola's connection to the Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States, in addition to the dependency inherent in these relationships. This theoretical physical map stresses that “a border is always already crossed and double-crossed, without the possibility of the ‘trans’cultural – whether petit or grand” (Michaelsen and Johnson 15). Of critical interest is how the writer addresses

these previously crossed borders and how they re-write and re-imagine the borders that both unite and separate two unique spaces. García Canclini's hybrid approach to borders facilitates a transdisciplinary understanding of the multi-dimensional concept, enabling one to envision Latin America and the diaspora as diverse, but also interconnected. García Canclini suggests that cultures do not have a "home base" or center, but are instead engaged in a process of continual orientation. In a similar way, the literary works examined in the present project help readers to re-orient, approaching the space of Hispaniola with a wider lens, broadening the historical and cultural scope of the Island's two countries and the tense relationship between them.

Evident from the inclusion of Latin American texts in this analysis, as well as the Dominican American literature written and published in the US diaspora, an interest in Hispaniola beyond the Island's borders is pivotal to the present study. For this reason, a pointed focus on Caribbean trans-nationalization helps to make sense of an outside interest in the history and reality of Hispaniola. Seminal Caribbean theoretical works, such as those of Fernando Ortiz, Antonio Benítez Rojo, and Edouard Glissant, point to an extension of cultural influence beyond national and political boundaries. The conception of figuratively flexible borders articulated by the aforementioned theoreticians serves as scaffolding to approach a similar idea with respect to Haiti-Dominican relations. Benítez Rojo's theoretical approach also facilitates the connectivity of Hispaniola with other Caribbean countries in the sense he advocates for an essential Caribbean character, piecing together the diverse histories, people, and languages existing in different Caribbean spheres. By envisioning a cultural geography of the Hispanophone Caribbean, the centuries of connections between the Spanish-speaking Caribbean islands and Haiti

are made more transparent. At the same time, in spite of the more recent pattern of critics such as Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* to overlook Haiti's historical and cultural significance, it is important to situate Haiti in a historical context, signaling the country's unique position as the first and only country to boast a successful revolt of black African slaves. The revolt of 1791 led to the abolition of slavery and the formation of the first black republic on January 1, 1804. It is important to note that the Dominican Republic is also often left out of historical anthologies of the Caribbean or Latin America. Thus, not only does a multi-faceted view of Haiti (viewing Haitians as anything more than the racial Other, for example) commonly go unmentioned in Dominican texts, but the Dominican Republic itself – for political and historical reasons – is also oftentimes relegated to marginal status in comparison to other countries in many anthologies and history books. I want to show that the events both of the past and present in the Dominican Republic, and on Hispaniola as a whole, are as important as those taking place elsewhere in the Caribbean and Latin America. I believe the literary texts analyzed in the four chapters to follow elevate the importance of and interest in Hispaniola. In this way, the present project not only highlights an alternate history and literary canon of a commonly forgotten isle by means of literary analysis, but also restores a past history and promulgates cultural understanding of recorded events.

The distinctive history of Haiti is indeed key to any examination of the representation in literature of the country that produced the world's first black republic. The unique history of the Dominican Republic is also noteworthy. Santo Domingo, the first official colony of the Americas, is a true land of "firsts:" the first colony to import slaves from Africa shortly after the arrival of Christopher Columbus in 1502, the first

official colony of the New World and also the first colony to import slaves from Africa, the site of the first rebellion of black slaves in 1522, and the first country to open a university in 1538. Inherent in the majority of historical sources documenting the turbulent past of the island of Hispaniola and the fate of its two countries, there are brief allusions to periods of camaraderie between the two nations. Despite mention of such moments of peace and interdependency between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, an overwhelming sentiment of resentment and hatred triumphs in the majority of these texts. Silvio Torres-Saillant, Frank Moya Pons, and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. are all guilty at times of eliding an understanding of cooperation or shared interest between the two countries. The centuries of relations between the two neighboring countries – including occupations, revolutions, and border treaties – leaves an open book for writers interested in re-telling and re-imagining such events and it is my aim to signal, by offering a new reading of twentieth- and twenty-first century texts, the reverberations and instances of mutual support and understanding between the two countries, in this way countering the fatal-conflict model of Dominican-Haitian relations. Some scholars, in recent years, have begun to re-think the cockfight metaphor, spearheaded by Michele Wucker’s 2000 publication of *Why the Cocks Fight*. Two prime examples are Eugenio Matibag’s *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint* and Samuel Martínez’s article “Not a Cockfight: Rethinking Haitian-Dominican Relations.” Both Matibag and Martínez attempt to offer an alternative vision of the intertwined history of the two countries, rejecting the vision of Haiti and the Dominican Republic as two tragic twins, instead focusing on important aspects of the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic commonly overlooked: the reciprocal influence and interdependence between the two nations.

Literature provides an understanding of the past that history books cannot offer; literature has the ability to re-envision the past and function as the point of departure to approaching an often neglected past illuminating a history of reliance and interdependency between two neighboring countries, an approach similar to the one taken by William Luis in *Literary Bondage*.¹² As Michel-Rolph Trouillot reminds readers in *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, Dominican leaders in particular are guilty of silencing Haiti. In his 1997 work, Trouillot urges readers to be critically aware of the silencing of the past. My dissertation project, in a similar way, encourages an awareness of how literature offers a counter-point to dominant discourse. While Trouillot's primary focus is history, this project is evidence of how literature succeeds where the historical sources to which Trouillot alludes have not – providing alternative narratives of the past that force readers to reassess their previously internalized histories. There is a tense relationship between writers committed to rupturing these silences and others working with authority figures to propose a literary understanding of the dominant history. It is my belief that the history of the Haitian-Dominican relationship and the alternative(s) to this history are more readily approached when considering Haiti through a multi-perspective Dominican, Dominican American, and over-arching Latin American *literary* lens.

The crisis of racial identity in the Dominican Republic is rooted in the negation of ethnic ties between Dominicans and Haitians. The anti-Haitianism such national rhetoric

¹² In *Literary Bondage*, Luis argues that the anti-slavery novel tradition in Cuba provides a narrative counter-discourse to the pro-slavery Cuban hegemony of the nineteenth century. This counter-discourse, then, served as the model for all following Cuban literature. For Luis, these anti-slavery novels tell the history that historians of the time could not.

disseminates deserves to be studied specifically within the literary realm.¹³ Matibag and Martínez have, for example, critically examined the relationship between Haitians and Dominicans, but their approaches are not rooted in literature. Matibag recognizes this blind-spot in a chapter of *Haitian Dominican Counterpoint* focused on literature. Matibag categorizes the chapter as a “quick survey” and confirms that his examination of the Haitian-Dominican connection in literature serves as a “prolegomenon to more extensive investigations” (165). Matibag’s and Martínez’s skimming or exclusion of Dominican literature for its representation of the Haitian subject indicates the need for further studies offering a literary portrayal of Haitians as more than the Dominicans’ barbaric lesser half. Both studies, however, challenge Fernando Valerio-Holguín’s conclusion in his 2000 article “Primitive Borders: Cultural Identity and Ethnic Cleansing in the Dominican Republic” suggesting that in Dominican history, literature, journalism, and sociology, the Haitian subject is synonymous with the primitive Other. Furthermore, recent literary studies entertaining the Haitian-Dominican relationship as the focal point of analysis are not comprehensive. *On the Edge: Writing the Border Between Haiti and the Dominican Republic* (2015) by Maria Cristina Fumagalli neglects to analyze Dominican American literature – an important element of the present study – and Ramón Antonio Victoriano-Martínez’s *Rayanos y Dominicanyorks: la dominicanidad del siglo XXI* (2014) is an insular study, neglecting to consider Latin American or the wider Hispanic Caribbean’s literary conceptions of Hispaniola. It is, in part, these gaps that this dissertation fills by

¹³ Dawn F. Stinchcomb’s *The Development of Literary Blackness in the Dominican Republic* (2004) considers how blacks and Haitians are portrayed as objects in Dominican literature, but keeps the broad focus on the development of “literary blackness.” I look more pointedly at a possible “literary haitianness” in my dissertation. I also consider Dominican American literary production whereas Stinchcomb does not.

considering canonical Latin American writers' visionings of Hispaniola and devoting a chapter to Latino/a literature. Not only does this project chart new territories in its navigation of the Haiti-Dominican relationship as presented in literature, but it does so with a theoretical base in border studies, lending a unique approach to canonical Dominican novels such as Marrero Aristy's *Over* and Prestol Castillo's *El masacre se pasa a pie*.

The Dominican, Dominican American, and Latin American texts examined here imagine and re-imagine the history of Hispaniola, and both the work of Benedict Anderson and Doris Sommer aide me in approaching the interplay between history, politics, and the novel. Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, for example, provides a framework to view the nation as a socially constructed community, keeping in mind the role of literature in creating nationalist character.¹⁴ Sommer's *Foundational Fictions*, on the other hand, considers how national romances serve as allegories for the development of the nation. Sommer emphasizes the acceptance of the texts she examines as examples of "national literature." Sommer's *One Master for Another* is another work I refer to regularly, as it challenges the identification of canonical Dominican novels as populist romances, including *Over* and *El masacre se pasa a pie*. Both the works of Anderson and Sommer connect to the aforementioned theories of Anzaldúa and Foucault as border studies typically construe an interrogation and problematization of national identity. Both physical borders and ideological Borders double as the site(s) of disruption, a space in

¹⁴ As Victoriano-Martínez correctly asserts, "[el] concepto de 'nacionalismo oficial' de Benedict Anderson, quien lo utiliza para referirse a la construcción del nacionalismo por parte de las clases altas europeas en el siglo XIX, pero que consider útil para definir con acierto las políticas públicas seguidas por el trujillato en su definición de la dominicanidad" (17).

which identity is constantly challenged, fragmented, and shifted. In the case of Hispaniola, the border is where *dominicanidad* and *haitianidad* break down; it is the site of reconstruction and re-evaluation of one's identity. As Judith Butler articulates in *Bodies That Matter*, the border can be read as the "constitutive outside" that troubles or "haunts" identity formation as the space creates "the persistent possibility of their disruption and rearticulation" (8).

This study is interested in the role of the novel in fostering the creation of a national identity and how the texts analyzed within this project both build up and tear down Dominican notions of identity. Anderson and Sommer both consider the connections between the formation of modern nations and the projection of the ideal histories of these nations in novels. One of Sommer's deemed "foundational fictions" is the Dominican Manuel de Jesús Galván's *Enriquillo*,¹⁵ a novel that exemplifies the ways in which Dominicans historically have disaffirmed the existence of African origins in their national culture, instead appropriating European and/or Taíno conceptions of Dominicanness.¹⁶ In this foundational work, Galván glorifies eastern Hispaniola's link to its indigenous Taíno roots – the novel is dubbed the "leyenda histórica dominicana." This

¹⁵ *Enriquillo* is a text that not only manipulates and reinvents the story of the Taíno cacique, Enriquillo, who led the rebellion against the Spanish at the start of the sixteenth century, but also that of Bartolomé de las Casas, the friar famed for recommending the importation of slaves from Africa to the colonies. The racial dialogue at play in *Enriquillo* helps to envision the Dominican perception of race and ethnicity in the nineteenth century and consider its influence in an end-all attempt to eradicate blackness.

¹⁶ Dominicanness or *dominicanidad*, as a term, attempts to construe a "Dominican national consciousness," but *dominicanidad* for early Dominican intellectuals was not synonymous with anti-black or anti-Haitian and did not surface in the works of Pedro Francisco Bonó or Eugenio María de Hostos (Mayes 17). Dominicanness, however, is linked to *Hispanicismo*, in the sense Dominican national identity has consistently insisted on an authentic representation of Spanish, Hispanic culture. See Kimberly Eison Simmons for more on *Hispanicismo* or *hispanidad* as construed in the Dominican Republic.

“national historical legend,” then, serves as an ideal point of departure and comparison for the twentieth and twenty-first century works analyzed in chapters one through four, as it highlights the moments when national identity is defined alongside the establishment of the nation or *patria*. The chapters to follow demonstrate how some of the selected works, although not all canonical or “foundational” texts, can also fall under the categorization of national literature. Likewise, a focus on “literary haitianness” speaks to my goal to view Haiti and its people primarily in Dominican and Dominican American literature, and not exclusively refer to better-known works (such as those of Alejo Carpentier, for example) as Sibylle Fischer and Emilio Jorge Rodríguez have done.¹⁷

The first chapter of this dissertation shines light on a pan-Latin American approach to the representation of Hispaniola in literature by offering an analysis of three critically acclaimed novels centered on the traumatic past of the Island. What draws me to the texts examined in this chapter is the fact that the structures of oppression and rebellion present in these novels are also present in the works examined in the following three chapters. These selected works are *La fiesta del chivo* (2000) by Peruvian Mario Vargas Llosa, *Changó, el gran putas* (1983) by Colombian Manuel Zapata Olivella, and *El reino de este mundo* (1949) by Cuban Alejo Carpentier. Each of these respective works interests me for different reasons. *La fiesta del chivo* demonstrates how the unique history of Hispaniola caught the attention of a Nobel Prize winning author. Vargas Llosa,

¹⁷ I mention Carpentier when referencing well-known, canonical texts because his novel *The Kingdom of This World* (1949), a work of historical fiction that tells the story of the Haitian Revolution and its aftermath considered in Chapter One, has been the topic of much discussion among critics; such critical studies on the novel include Roberto González Echevarría’s *Alejo Carpentier: The Pilgrim at Home* (1977).

enthralled by the secrets of the Trujillo era, succeeds in re-visiting the story of an otherwise silenced victim of the atrocities of the Trujillo regime, Urania Cabral, and weaving it alongside the debated history of Trujillo's assassination in 1961. *Changó, el gran putas* presents an Afrocentric perspective of the colonization of the Americas, in this way re-writing the monumental moments of African and American history, and it boasts an entire chapter on the colonial and nineteenth century independence period in Haiti.¹⁸ Zapata Olivella's decision to include a vision of the Haitian African diaspora in his novel, and his interest in African religions and musical "languages," help readers to make sense of Haiti's inclusion in *Changó* as well as Haiti's pertinence to the story of the African diaspora. Finally, Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* recounts the Haitian Revolution and its aftermath by giving voice to a Haitian peasant, Ti Noel. Furthermore, *El reino* is an especially important text to examine when considering the intersections between a literary work and historical investigation, as Carpentier attempts to approach African religion – namely vodou¹⁹ – and the Haitian Revolution, while attributing to the slaves the role of agents and informants (instead of the "silenced" objects of study).

A sampling of questions prompting me to explore this pan-Latin American view of Hispaniola and Haiti includes the following: What attracted these canonical authors to Haiti and the Dominican Republic? How does Haiti appear from the outside looking in and how might this view differ from that of the more insular lens of its Dominican neighbors? Why or how might one consider these important literary voices isolated ones

¹⁸ I will also consider Zapata Olivella's concept known as *nuevo muntu*, referring to the unity between the three races – African, European, and Indian – in which the African contributions to the New World are rooted.

¹⁹ While the spelling of Haitian "vodou" varies, (other variants include vodu, Vodou, and Vodoo), I have elected to spell it "vodou," in line with the spelling of the word in Joan Dayan's *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (1995).

in the sense that Hispaniola plays a prominent role in these works, but is completely disregarded in works of the same period by different authors? How do the authors envision the Island or the country they narrate and what do they say about history, culture, and traditions? Are they influenced by events taking place in Hispaniola, in their country of origin, or in their country of residence? Additionally, this chapter considers why these authors appear fascinated with the topic they discuss: the history of Hispaniola. It is vital to emphasize that each of these authors elected to transcend national borders and their own national “traumas” to write about a small Caribbean country. As Vargas Llosa clarifies in the prologue to *La fiesta del chivo*, the horror surrounding the Trujillo regime – and the figure of “The Goat” himself – proved to be an addicting one, a story that had to be told.

The second chapter of the present dissertation focuses on Dominican works written pre-1961 with a marked interest in depicting Haiti and its people. This chapter pays special attention to the unabashed anti-Haitian sentiment that appeared in the first half of the twentieth century, undeniably linked to the thirty-one year dictatorship of Trujillo, and supported by authors such as Miguel Peña Batlle and Joaquín Balaguer, both of whom were considered members of Trujillo’s intellectual following. When examining the *trujillato* and its representation in literature, I will also refer to the complicity of writers and texts with the power structure of the society from which they write, in this way showing the relationship between political power and writing. As Trouillot argues, history is told in relation to the powerful forces that silence some sources while favoring others. The outset of this chapter outlines the importance of the *trujillato* in Dominican history and clarifies how Trujillo’s reign dramatically shaped Dominican-Haitian

relations, while at the same time continued to support anti-Haitian sentiment present in earlier periods. Trujillo, in power from 1930-61, is largely responsible for the growth of Dominican anti-Haitian sentiment since the early twentieth century, despite Dominican demographics certifying the nation's mulatto majority. *El Generalísimo*, as many addressed Trujillo, was not only involved in politics, but he also marked his territory within Dominican intellectual circles.

Marrero Aristy subtly creates a narrative context in which Dominican characters sympathize and commiserate with Haitian subject. Maggiolo, the contemporary Dominican author whose work is analyzed in chapter two, defines the appearance in literature of the “haitiano compadecido” in his “Tipología del tema haitiano.” He confirms: “la novela dominicana aceptó al haitiano como un ser explotado; la narrativa lo albergó como la víctima total de la intrigas y del azar” (109). Although the pain and suffering of the Haitian subject is certainly rendered palpable in *Over*, Marrero Aristy carefully evades a “pro-afro” discourse or signs of a “change that would ruffle the feathers of the Trujillo guard and their ideological offspring” (Torres-Saillant, *Tribulations* 1105). Yet, there are numerous examples of the author's commiseration with his Haitian neighbors in the novel. Marrero Aristy's account of Dominican-Haitian relations, life in the *batey*, and wages of the plantation workers, for example, provide the reader with a glimpse of these realities eclipsed by the dominant, hegemonic historical record – in part because the vast majority of plantation accounts during the *trujillato* were mysteriously discarded.

A later publication of Marrero Aristy, *La República Dominicana: Origen y destino del pueblo cristiano más antiguo de América* (1957), also illuminates the realities

of the Dominican sugar plantations. In this text, however, the author “plays it safe” and evades looking compassionately upon his Haitian brothers. Instead, in a fictional recreation of a 1522 slave rebellion on a Dominican sugar plantation, Marrero Aristy sides with the planters, and not the black slaves. His multiple, varied literary representations of Haitians make Marrero Aristy himself an integral literary figure who needs to be considered in evaluating the complex and not always negative appearance of Haiti and Haitians in Dominican literature. The intricate relationship between the past and the present in Marrero Aristy’s best-seller, *Over*, is a prime example of what the Dominican and Dominican American authors examined in the following pages also do: attempt to understand the present by writing and re-writing the past.

Around the same time of *Over*’s publication in 1939, works by writers who even more clearly sympathized with the situation of Haitians on Dominican soil also found a voice. A prime example of such literary compassion is *El masacre se pasa a pie* (1973) by Freddy Prestol Castillo. The latter part of the second chapter focuses on this Dominican novel that gives an accurate, unabashed account of the 1937 Massacre. Here, I also read the text alongside a work by the same author, *Paisajes y meditaciones de una frontera* (1943), that parallels the anti-Haitian discourse of the time. Although *El Masacre se pasa a pie* was published in 1973, approximately a decade after Trujillo’s assassination, it was composed in the wake of the 1937 Massacre and buried in the backyard of the author’s mother until it was deemed safe to “unearth” the manuscript. Every chapter uncovers a particular aspect of the Massacre and the range of characters – Dominican, Haitian, and those of both nationalities– lend multiple perspectives to the horrific event. Prestol Castillo’s recreation of the Massacre is the only novel with this

precise vision of history, influenced by the fact the author himself was stationed at the border as a government-paid lawyer during the horrendous event. Prestol Castillo's representation allows readers to perceive Haitians – and the history of this particular genocide, one often written out of the historical annals of “genocide” – under a different light. My analysis of *El masacre* is accompanied by a digital map that plots the boldfaced geographic markers in the first editions of the novel. Seemingly insignificant, when these emphasized points are mapped a pattern emerges, highlighting the author's accentuation of the Island's western half, Haiti. This chapter also briefly considers works of the middle to end of the twentieth century that serve to illuminate the increasing prominence of Afro-centric literature,²⁰ such as short stories written by Ramón Lacay Polanco and Juan Bosch.

The third chapter focuses on the creation of a counter-narrative – the Dominican narratives re-writing Haiti and providing an alternate view of the nation and its people – and the strong hold it has in Dominican literature post-Trujillo. The end of the dictatorship's censorship on literature and the arts had a profound impact on salient themes in national literature, including those related to Haiti and Haitian tradition. Marcio

²⁰ I use the term “Afro-centric” literature here, as opposed to *negrista* or *negrismo*, because I want to avoid referring to the traditional usages of the terms and their connection to vanguard movements in the twentieth century. Although the Dominican Republic was home to famed *negrista* poet, Manuel del Cabral (often read alongside Puerto Rican Luis Palés Matos and Cuban Nicolás Guillén), I also want to avoid convoluting the two terms “literatura negra” (written by blacks on Afro themes) and “literatura negrista” (written by non-black writers on Afro themes). As James J. Davis notes, and I agree, “en la República Dominicana no se suele identificar con una raza, especialmente la raza negra” (714) and for this reason it is problematic to define Dominican literature as either “negra” or “negrista.” Alternatively, for Stinchcomb, *negrista* literature is defined where authors “admit that blackness is an essential part of Domicanness” (52). This is a definition that is quickly problematized. Marrero Aristy, for example, is often considered a pre-cursor to the *negrista* movement, regardless of the fact he denied entirely his Afro-Dominican identity.

Veloz Maggiolo is the focus of the third chapter; his work transcends cultural, social, and geographic borders – often focused on an ancestral world in which the notion of time is non-existent – revealing the social and political realities of the Dominican Republic. The author’s dedication to narrating the *trujillato*, even into the twenty-first century, distinguishes him as one of the few Dominican writers electing to return time and time again to the Trujillo era in an attempt to re-examine Dominican society and culture. Haiti forms an integral piece of Veloz Maggiolo’s imagining of the Dominican Republic and the author constantly intertwines the histories of both nations signaling the constant interplay between the countries sharing the island of Hispaniola. *El hombre del acordeón* (2003) is perhaps the best example of the author’s work that presents Haiti and its people as a primary focus. In *El hombre del acordeón*, a novel set on the ambiguous Haitian-Dominican border, Veloz Maggiolo reflects on the irreversible damage done by the thirty-one years of Trujillo’s reign, but also portrays a broader history tracing the ancestral line of a spiritual border community deviating from a single nationality. Chapter Three also considers Veloz Maggiolo’s literary detailing of the first US Occupation of the Dominican Republic in 1916 in *La vida no tiene nombre* (1965). The 1965 novel boasts a Dominican-Haitian protagonist.

Veloz Maggolio is representative of writers of the post-Trujillo era. Although allotted more freedom in his writing, he consciously chooses to return to the past. As readers, we sense Veloz Maggiolo’s need to re-write history and un-silence what was muted during Trujillo’s reign; by re-envisioning the past, Veloz Maggiolo forces himself and others to grapple with the future and ensure history does not remain only one-sided, biased, or anti-Haitian.

The fourth and final chapter of this dissertation focuses on diasporic representations of *lo haitiano* as perceived by Dominican Americans who represent an important sector of diaspora voices that are carving a new place for Haiti and Haitians in Dominican thought. Dominican American writers have brought this part of the region – both Haiti and the Dominican Republic – to a world audience. For example, Junot Díaz was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) and Julia Alvarez’s *How the García Girls Lost their Accents* (1991) has been translated into more than ten languages.

The contemporary works of Dominican American writers highlight the longevity of the nebulous, yet intricate literary representations of occidental Quisqueya.²¹ In the analysis of these Latino/a works, I first consider Alvarez’s *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*, as well as her recently published memoir, *A Wedding in Haiti* (2012). Next, I turn to Díaz’s critically acclaimed *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, paying special attention to its historically-rooted footnotes. I end the chapter by considering other Dominican American literature such as Loida Maritza Pérez’s *Geographies of Home* (2000) and Raquel Cepeda’s memoir *Bird of Paradise* (2013). Analyzing each of these works, I address what the specific space of the United States does for the writer when revisiting the history of his or her country of origin. Of primary interest is how these authors have re-written Haiti by re-examining and problematizing the mistakes of their homeland. For these Dominican American authors, Haiti and its people are integral parts of Dominican culture, community, and history. These Latino/a authors re-write Hispaniola from a diasporic space, with increased literary freedom and with a will to re-

²¹ Quisqueya, originally “quisqueia,” and meaning “Mother of the Earth,” is the Taíno term for Hispaniola.

envision the Island's past, reassessing history while at the same time making Hispaniola's history accessible for the first time to many US-based readers.

Central to this dissertation is a rich historical context enabling me to better understand the space Haiti occupies in the Dominican imaginary and to reflect upon the fact that literature should be read as a response to a specific historical period. The authors, both Dominican and otherwise, examined in the pages to follow are interested in the history of Hispaniola and they refuse to let the past disappear, offering readers new ways of understanding the Island's oftentimes one-sided, or entirely forgotten, history. I am especially intrigued by the ways in which Haiti is represented in such literature, deviating from the anti-Haitian sentiment that dominates the majority of twentieth and twenty-first century texts. Through an analysis of the primary texts, I will offer a new approach for literary studies by articulating the silenced moments of Hispaniola's history and bringing to the forefront the numerous ways one can view the relationship between the two neighboring countries. By rooting my analysis in border theory – most specifically, the ideological Borders that separate one side of Hispaniola from the other – my study re-inscribes the border by de-emphasizing the dividing line. In doing so I refrain from positioning Dominicans and Haitians against one another and defining the Dominican national identity with the Haitian as the antipode, instead revealing an alternative connection between the two. This duality and notion of the “power of two” refutes Lil Despradel's claim when referring to the two nations of Hispaniola that as a result of the difference of customs and the rivalry that exists between the two countries, there will never be a perfect union or harmony (102).

A careful analysis of my primary texts transgresses literary borders by venturing beyond the one-sided and commonly critiqued white-Iberian national imagery present in Dominican literature by illustrating how an understanding of Haiti in Dominican literature beyond the negative, stereotypical literary conception linked to Dominican *negrophobia* and anti-Haitianism is key to understanding why Dominicans today are re-envisioning their complex racial and ethnic identities, built on centuries of politically disseminated myths. The study endeavors to uncover the literary evidence of Dominican and Dominican American writers alternatively representing Haiti and its people across time and geographic limits, and also takes into account how other Caribbean and Latin American authors have represented Haiti and Hispaniola. My aim in the following chapters is to debunk the cock-fight metaphor describing the relationship between the two countries – the Dominican Republic and Haiti embodying two cocks in the pit, a brutal fight to the death – and instead offer a varied, less antagonistic Dominican national chronicle of a traditionally oppressed neighbor. In this way, Hispaniola’s map is redrawn. Although a physical border remains, its significance is lessened and the ideological Border – as envisioned in the novels and memoirs examined in the following four chapters – purports a totality and wholeness that draws the two countries together as opposed to pushing them apart. Trujillo’s words “Now let them say that we have no borders,” referencing his plan for the *dominicanización* of the border region, gain new meaning when the relationship between the two countries is challenged and Haitians encounter an alternate representation. The Dominican and Dominican American and Latin American writers considered in the following four chapters taunt the late Trujillo and his cautionary statement, responding, “*we have no borders.*”

CHAPTER 1

WHOSE HAITI?: PAN-LATIN AMERICAN INTERPRETATIONS OF HISPANIOLA

The Haiti imagined in Cuba (or Jamaica, or Charleston, or New Orleans, or Bahia), this Caribbean or Black Atlantic, this Haiti of liberation figurative and literal – was this also Haiti's Haiti?
Ada Ferrer²²

Interpreted in the light of internalized scarcity and considered as irreducible and inexpiable opposition of oppressors and oppressed, constitutes the motor, the mainspring, the praxeological principle of historical movement.
Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel²³

The island of Hispaniola and its rich, oftentimes contested history belongs not only to the Dominican and Haitian people, but also to those influenced by or drawn to the Island's turbulent past. As the title of this chapter suggests, Hispaniola and its history belongs to many in the sense it has captivated the interest of canonical Latin American writers like Alejo Carpentier, Manuel Zapata Olivella, and Mario Vargas Llosa. These authors have added to the multiplicity of the border between what we now call Haiti and the Dominican Republic, confirming the Island's far-reaching influence and offering a fictional, pan-Latin American understanding of the historical events that shaped the Caribbean Isle. The above quote of historian Ada Ferrer speaks to the many "Haitis" that existed and continue to exist in the Americas and beyond, referencing the myriad ways in which the country has been (mis)interpreted and re-written. This chapter considers the factors that contribute to these aforementioned authors' narrative portrayals of the land of

²² *Freedom's Mirror*, 345.

²³ Qtd. in *Satire and the Moral Limits of War and Terrorism*, 18.

tall mountains; the indigenous, Taíno meaning of “Ayiti;” and its sister country and attempts to uncover why they ventured beyond their respective national frontiers and their own national “traumas” to write about Hispaniola. Just as the Island is fertile ground for innumerable fictional interpretations, its history also “belongs” to or offers linkages to, as exemplified by the nationalities of the writers examined in the pages to follow, Cuba, Colombia, and Peru. This first chapter offers a global scope, traveling beyond Haiti’s “Haiti” or Hispaniola’s “Hispaniola” to instead uncover Latin America’s interpretation of these spaces.

My interest in a wider Latin American vision of Haiti and Hispaniola is centered not only on the multiplicity of the Island’s borders that the novels analyzed in the following pages represent, but also in the structures of rebellion and oppression present in the works – themes repeated in the Dominican and Dominican American texts examined in the remaining three chapters. Alejo Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo* (1949), Manuel Zapata’s Olivella’s *Changó, el gran putas* (1983), and Mario Vargas Llosa’s *La fiesta del chivo* (2000) directly address Hispaniola’s history – colonial, dictatorial, and otherwise – with a special interest in the Haitian Revolution. The Haitian Revolution, in fact, provides the narrative framework for two of the three novels – (in the case of *Changó*, the Revolution is depicted in the third chapter and not throughout the novel) – confirming a twentieth and twenty-first century desire to return to a precise historical moment, one that has often been neglected in Western historical annals. When Haiti became the first black independent state in 1804, founded by former slaves, all neighboring governments refused to recognize the newfound independence (a refusal serving to confirm their racist logic rooted in colonial structures). These countries instead

continued to view Haiti, (despite the fact it had a formal constitution and naval force), as a French colony cast in a state of rebellion. Although the first black Republic can, in many contexts, be understood as a blind spot in historical studies of the Caribbean and the Colonial era, several recent studies published in the last ten years have renewed an interest in the historical event and the region.

It is common to refer to the islands of which the Caribbean region is comprised as “neighbors,” particularly given the geographical proximity of the countries making up the Greater Antilles (including Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and other islands). However, the only “true” neighbors aside from Saint Martin whose *vecinidad* is not broken by a body of water – instead sharing a physical border – are the Dominican Republic and Haiti. With the interest of at least two of the novels examined within this chapter in Hispaniola’s colonial history, it is vital to reference, if only briefly, the historically contested and shifting borderline shared by the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Haiti as we know it today first belonged to the Spanish crown, and the island itself was not split into two colonies until the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697.²⁴ It is important to note that other Caribbean islands have also been redefined by European powers – French, Spanish, and otherwise – and have endured their own shifting of “borders.” Puerto Rico’s current status as a US commonwealth, for example, has metaphorically linked the Island’s borderline to the United States, but on a global scale Puerto Rico continues to be viewed as a country with its own, independent national identity.

In the case of Hispaniola, however, the Treaty of Ryswick did not legalize the border spaces. In the late 1600s, for example, an area on the north coast of the island, (on

²⁴ It was not until the Treaty of Aranjuez in 1777 when the French colony of Saint Domingue was officially recognized by the Spanish.

the Spanish side), was populated by a growing group of French nationalists, creating a state within a state and numerous disputes. Other “erasures” of the borderline include two Haitian Occupations. The first unification of the previous Spanish and French colonies was spearheaded by Haitian General, Toussaint L’Ouverture. Expanding his sphere of control to the eastern side of Hispaniola, Toussaint and his troops invaded Santo Domingo in 1800 and captured the important Caribbean port (they occupied the Spanish colony for over a year, until early 1802). The Island was unified again from 1822 until 1844 under Haitian rule; this conjoining of the two countries during the first half of the nineteenth century was led by Jean-Pierre Boyer. Boyer championed a vision of merging the political and cultural futures of both former colonies, an ambitious goal that resulted in deterioration of Santo Domingo and growing resentment of Haitians on behalf of Dominican nationalists, namely Juan Pablo Duarte who led the resistance to the Occupation.

Returning to the “failed” Treaty of Ryswick, the history of a treaty not consecrating borderlines in Hispaniola repeated itself in 1936 when the same treaty was revisited by Haitian President Stenio Vincent and Rafael Trujillo. The goal of the meeting was to draw a definitive border between the two nations. As a “sealed” border between the two countries did not translate into a fixed impassable border, Trujillo responded with the 1937 Haitian Massacre. The fragmentation of this *raya* or line – at times pronounced or emphasized for its ability to separate two countries and at others forgotten in an attempt to unify them – speaks to the multiplicities of borders defining the Island and also references the different historical moments that attracted the authors considered in the following pages. The major source of (literary) attraction, however, is the Haitian

Revolution, an event that bestowed new meaning to Haitian-Dominican relations and Hispaniola's relations with the world. The Revolution served not only to manipulate and re-form the physical border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti (as colonies, and later, as independent countries), but also to reshape and *misshape* Haiti's metaphorical border with the wider Caribbean and Latin America at large – a reformulation that has resulted in an array of interpretations of the event and its aftermath.

The Haitian Revolution's 200th Anniversary and Beyond

The founding of an independent black state – Haiti – and the only successful slave revolt in global history, (a rebellion that led to the creation of a nation), can be identified as the most concrete consequence of the Haitian Revolution. Its significance in both a regional and world-wide context expands well beyond the founding of an independent Haiti and its influence gave rise to the two aforementioned Haitian Occupations of the Dominican Republic in the early nineteenth century, the conversion of Cuba into the world's number one sugar producer for the remainder of the century, and slave revolts in neighboring Caribbean countries. The Revolution succeeded in disrupting colonial structures and greatly impacted the abolition of slavery in French colonies such as Saint Lucia, (France first abolished slavery in 1794 but it was later reinstated from 1802-48), and its subversive significance has resulted in a wide array of literary interpretations. Ferrer's allusion to the "power of Haiti beyond its borders" (346) relates to the country's ability to speak to and draw in important literary voices of the twentieth century and before without geographic restraints.

While neighboring Caribbean countries initially belittled the Haitian Revolution, refusing to acknowledge the newly formed country as an independent republic out of fear, economic, and political pressures, – or all of the above – the historical event constitutes an area of sustained interest for scholars. In the last decade, interest in the Haitian Revolution has been piqued, possibly as a reverberation of the 200th anniversary in 2004 (200 years after Haitian Independence was won in 1804, following the 1791 rebellion) or the aftermath of the 2010 7.0 magnitude earthquake in Port-au-Prince and surrounding areas. Evidence of the renewed interest of historians, anthropologists, and literary critics (among others) – resulting in numerous cultural and literary studies, in addition to historical investigations – is the onslaught of works published post 2000. These include, but are not limited to, Laurent M. Dubois’ *Haiti: The Aftershocks of History* (2013), David P. Geggus’ *The Haitian Revolution: A Documentary History* (2014), Robin Blackburn’s *The American Crucible: Slavery and Emancipation in the Americas* (2011), Nick Nesbitt’s *Universal Emancipation: The Haitian Revolution and the Radical Enlightenment* (2008), and Deborah Jenson’s *Beyond the Slave Narrative: Politics, Sex, and Manuscripts in the Haitian Revolution* (2012). Published in 2014 and 2015, respectively, two literary studies, Philip Kaisary’s *The Haitian Revolution in the Literary Imagination* and Víctor Figueroa’s *Prophetic Visions of the Past: Pan-Caribbean Representations of the Haitian Revolution*, represent two detailed, complete analyses of the Haitian Revolution as depicted in pan-Caribbean literature.

For the purpose of the current project, it is important to expand on the recent works of Kaisary and Figueroa. Kaisary’s *The Haitian Revolution in the Literary Imagination* addresses the Revolution not only in the “literary imagination,” but also in

music and art. While a majority of the authors considered in Kaisary's study are Caribbean, including Aimé Césaire, C.L.R James, René Depestre, and Alejo Carpentier, the genre-spanning analysis also includes the British artist Kimathi Donkor and American Madison Smart Bell, among others. The study highlights the broad and intricate cultural impact of the Revolution, re-positioning the importance of the historical event in contemporary scholarly discourse. Organized into two succinct parts – racial and conservative representations of the Haitian Revolution – Kaisary frames his approach within a politicized context that seeks to establish Haiti and the political reverence of the revolution as an ideological backdrop for each of the primary texts analyzed in the work. His approach to Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo*, for example, is framed by the conservatism inherent in the novel as Kaisary argues the understanding of the Haitian Revolution in the work absconds its more radical qualities – namely a “radical rational humanism” as an attribute of the slaves who disbanded colonial structures in Saint Domingue, eventually winning their freedom (121). Kaisary suggests that while Carpentier's realist masterpiece offers certain commonalities with the radical vision of Négritude in works of Aimé Césaire and René Depestre, the nods to radicalism fail to align with emancipatory political action.

Figuroa's study approaches the Haitian Revolution as a floating signifier for the Caribbean and attempts to both fragment and piece together a Caribbean literary representation of the momentous event that, like all historical moments, has an imperfect and tainted record in history. The events of the Revolution are further muddled and crossed by Caribbean writers who have devoted themselves to piecing together their own version of history. Figuroa's goal in *Prophetic Visions of the Past* centers on analyzing

twentieth century Caribbean literary texts for the ways in which the Revolution materializes within them, focusing specifically on each writers' unique social, political, and geographical context. Some of the primary texts Figueroa selects – all of which are well-known works – are also analyzed in this chapter, namely Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* and Zapata Olivella's *Changó el gran putas*. Other literary works examined in Figueroa's study align with those highlighted by Kaisary including C.L.R. James' *The Black Jacobins* and Aimé Césaire's 1963 play *La tragédie du roi Christophe*. The theoretical backbone for Figueroa is Walter Mignolo's notion of "colonial difference" as understood in Mignolo's *Local Histories/Global Designs* (2000). Mignolo's 2000 text helps Figueroa to historically contextualize the symbolic event by focusing on the subaltern rationality of the Haitian Revolution and the ways in which it reconfigured the "modern/colonial world system" and the dominant Eurocentric worldview. Figueroa does not, however, venture into literary representations of the Revolution written by authors originating from the wider Latin American region, instead focusing more closely on Caribbean renderings of the event (from all three linguistic regions). While both of these studies represent an important decision on the scholars' part to view the Haitian Revolution in literature from a pan-Caribbean standpoint, neither work focuses on Dominican literature nor does either of the studies consider Latino/a representations of the historical moment that challenged and dethroned colonial supremacy in the Caribbean.

There are also recent studies that pinpoint the repercussions of the Haitian Revolution to a specific geographical location – as opposed to a broader focus on the Caribbean or Latin American representative of Figueroa's and Kaisary's approaches.

This geographical, spatial interest, though, does not necessarily entail a closer look at the relationship between the two colonies (and later, independent countries) sharing the island of Hispaniola as this dissertation project does, but instead more commonly highlights the relation between Haiti and Cuba. A marked scholarly interest in the relationship between Haiti and Cuba is grounded in the geographic proximity of the two countries and two significant migratory waves of Haitians to Cuba – one of which directly followed the slave uprising in 1791. A selection of the studies centered on the Haitian/Cuban cultural, political, and economical intersections during and after the Haitian Revolution include Emilio Jorge Rodríguez’s *Haiti and Trans-Caribbean Literary Identity* (2011), Elzbieta Sklodowska’s *Espectros y espejismos: Haití en el imaginario cubano* (2012), and the more recent Ada Ferrer’s *Freedom’s Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (2014).

E.J. Rodríguez’s scholarship – published in both Spanish and English – represents the only bilingual study of those mentioned here, addressing the multiple languages spoken in the Caribbean islands. The title of E.J. Rodríguez’s publication suggests the critic is interested in a trans-Caribbean literary representation of Haiti, but the content proves otherwise. Aside from essays on two Haitian authors, Fernand Hibbert and Jaques Stephen Alexis, and fleeting mention of a relatively random selection of “Quisqueyan Oral Discourse,” (or Dominican literature), the work is primarily concerned with Haiti as envisioned by Cuban writers such as Alejo Capentier, Nicolás Guillén, and, to a lesser extent, Carlos Enríquez, Wifredo Lam, Roberto Diago, Antonio Benítez Rojo, and Teodoro Ramos Blanco. E.J. Rodríguez’s introduction traces his interest in Haiti and, more explicitly, the cultural ties between Cuba and Haiti. Rodríguez ascertains that such

cultural relations are marked by “Migratory displacements of citizens from the neighboring island to the provinces in the eastern region of Cuba since the end of the 18th century, with the resulting contribution of cultural elements and exchanges among intellectuals in both countries” (133). Furthermore, Carpentier’s “peculiar relationship within Haitian history and culture” (161) is of utmost importance to E.J. Rodríguez’s work and the references to Carpentier’s 1951 article “Miremos hacia Haití,” in which Carpentier addresses the pressing need of including Haitian novels when drawing an overview of Latin American literature, are multiple. E.J. Rodríguez’s attempt to re-cast Carpentier’s literary corpus to encompass a “mirar hacia Haití” that includes external (pan-Caribbean) representations of Haiti falls short as it instead centers on Haiti as imagined in Cuban literature.

Espectros y espejismos: Haití en el imaginario cubano by Elzbieta Sklodowska purports, yet again, a singular *mirada* toward Haiti, asserting that the “presencia tangible de Haití en Cuba es innegable” (13). Although the first three chapters look to define the history of the Haitian presence in Cuba (with special attention given to the Haitian Revolution), the following three chapters consider Haiti as depicted in the literary imagination of four Cuban writers: Marta Rojas, Pablo Armando Fernández, Antonio Benítez Rojo, and Joel James Figarola. The study, by conjoining the histories of Haiti and Cuba through literary production visibilizes “el gran interés por el Caribe unificador” (102). Haiti plays a major role in this Caribbean unification and an analysis of Benítez Rojo’s *La isla que se repite* in chapter five gives added weight to Sklodowska’s Caribbean merger. At the same time, Haiti is marked as unique, the author identifying the Creole language and vodou religion as signifiers of Haitian “alterity” (221).

The most recent publication addressing Cuban-Haitian relations with the Haitian Revolution as its backdrop is historian Ada Ferrer's *Freedom's Mirror: Cuba and Haiti in the Age of Revolution* (2014). While Ferrer confirms in her introduction that the study is "anchored in Cuba" (12), the text bounces from one physical space to the other to reveal an intertwined history of slavery and freedom made and unmade in two Caribbean contexts. Situating Haiti in the early nineteenth century as a challenge and assault to European order and customs, the work also focuses on what Haiti represented for non-Europeans, especially its ability to stand for "hope to imagine possible futures" (11). For Cubans, such "possible futures" meant an upswing in sugar production (by the 1820s Cuba was the largest sugar producer in the world), and for others the possibility of rebellion and an end to slavery (the increased sugar production in Cuba following the Haitian Revolution also led to a massive expansion of slavery on the Island). In order to examine the ways in which Cubans used the Haitian Revolution to their (dis)advantage, Ferrer structures her study in two parts to focus first on the events of the Haitian Revolution and their immediate reception in Cuba and second on its immediate aftermath, including the antislavery and anticolonial movement in Cuba led by José Antonio Aponté.²⁵ In *Freedom's Mirror* Haiti is a mutable concept, referred to by Ferrer as a "flexible notion and image" that could be "invoked strategically" (15) in different political, social, economic situations – a view that can be expanded beyond the Cuban and Haitian relationship. The quote beginning this chapter, questioning the existence of

²⁵ Ferrer's *Freedom's Mirror* includes a groundbreaking analysis of José Antonio Aponté's (leader of the antislavery movement in Cuba) lost book *libro de pinturas*. Missing since the mid-1800s, Ferrer analyzes Aponté's illustrations in the book as they are described in his 1812 trial. The pictures imagine Cuba as the New Haiti and the next successful slave rebellion through Aponté's eyes.

“Haiti’s Haiti,” beckons scholars to delve deeper into the ways different geographic spaces, Caribbean and non, interpret the events of the Revolution in Haiti and construe them in various ways to influence their own battles with colonialism and slavery. Ferrer’s study, bolstered by the rich interconnected relationship between Cuba and Haiti in the late eighteenth century and beyond, offers an in-depth analysis of the implications of forming an independent black state amongst a Caribbean sea teeming with colonial slave regimes.

The obviation of such pan-Caribbean connections offered by E.J. Rodríguez, Sklodowska, and Ferrer re-situates the relationship between Haiti and Cuba. They also renew the importance of a compendious analysis of the two Caribbean nations, despite the fact they belong to different linguistic regions and have markedly different histories of colonialism and enslavement. All of the aforementioned studies, both literary and historical, recognize the Haitian Revolution as a foundational, groundbreaking event that altered not only Caribbean and Latin American history, but global history as well. While the acknowledgement of the large-scale impact of this event is important in itself as it urges scholars to reassess the magnitude of the historical affair, the keen interest of the studies mentioned above in Haiti-Cuba relations serves to eclipse or nullify the relation between Haiti and its immediate neighbor, the Dominican Republic. The current project aims, in part, to refocus a bipartite visioning of Haiti and Cuba, instead concentrating on Haiti and the Dominican Republic. Chapters Two through Four encapsulate an alternate reading of the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic – and the history of Hispaniola in light of the Haitian Occupations, 1937 Massacre, and US Interventions – as perceived in literature. Furthermore, in terms of migratory displacement of Haitians

and intellectual or political exchanges between Haiti and another country, the Dominican Republic surpasses Cuba and any other Caribbean or non-Caribbean nation. Not to mention, the literary studies mentioned above do not include diasporic representations, while the present study considers the important contributions of Dominican American authors.

A (Literary) Border: Between History and Fiction

Returning to the three primary novels to be analyzed in the present chapter, it is conducive to begin by charting some commonalities between them. While the focus is on the Haitian Revolution in both *El reino* and *Changó*, and on the *trujillato* in *La fiesta*, all three novels are examples of historical revisionism in the sense they offer alternate versions of historical events. In the case of the Haitian Revolution and the Trujillo regime, both historical moments are traditionally recorded within the parameters of what can be considered a Eurocentric, patriarchal tradition. Such “dominant” histories often succeed in dismissing and overshadowing history as told from the perspective of the oppressed. The novels written by Carpentier, Zapata Olivella, and Vargas Llosa challenge and confront these traditional versions of history by re-envisioning and re-writing them. In a very similar way, the Dominican and Dominican American authors whose literary works are analyzed in subsequent chapters also offer alternatives to a dominant history, challenging the stereotypical portrayal of the Haitian-Dominican conflict by imagining a deviation from the norm, in this way re-envisioning the history or “cock fight” metaphor that has traditionally defined the relationship between the two neighboring countries. This interest in the interplay between history and fiction is what ties all four chapters together.

The foundational, arguably canonical, status of the three novels examined in this first chapter in relation to Seymour Menton's delineation of the "New Historical Novel" in his 1993 study *Latin America's New Historical Novel* is a necessary starting point. In the following paragraphs, I will briefly summarize, as well as problematize, Menton's definition of the New Latin American Historical Novel (NHN) and its alignment, or not, with *El reino*, *Changó*, and *La fiesta*. I will also address some of the recurring themes and characteristics of the three novels, commonalities repeated in many of the Dominican and Dominican American works to follow.

Menton's study not only offers a detailed description of the NHN – within the rubric of six core characteristics – but also traces the beginning of the Historical Novel by placing the subgenre on a literary and historical trajectory.²⁶ According to Menton, the foundations of the Latin American historical novel reach back to the nineteenth century. At first, historical novels in Latin America identified with Romanticism bolstered in a fomentation of national consciousness. Authors attempted to familiarize their readers with characters and events of the past in novels such as Alberto Blest Gana's *Durante la reconquista* (1897). A second phase of the Latin American historical novel pertains to the *modernista* period (1882-1915) when historical novels instead offered an alternate to "costumbrista realism" and "positivistic naturalism" (19). This push against realism and naturalism resulted in novels that recreated a specific historical period such as Argentinian Enrique Larreta's *La Gloria de don Ramiro* (1908) that returned to the

²⁶ The six characteristics of the Latin American NHN are the following: 1) The importance of a philosophical idea overriding the mimetic recreation of a given historical period; 2) The distortion of history via omissions, exaggerations, and anachronisms; 3) The use of fictitious protagonists rooted in history (a literary depiction of history's "outstanding men and women;" 4) Metafiction; 5) Intertextuality; and 6) The existence of conflicting events, characters, and worldviews (Menton 22-24).

sixteenth century figure Phillip II of Spain (Menton 19). The last facet of the Latin America historical novel preceding the NHN, according to Menton, took place during the first half of the twentieth century. During this final stage leading up to the delineation of the NHN, a nationalist focus resurfaced and authors showed a renewed interest in regional issues such as landownership, racism, and socioeconomic exploitation. Prime examples of this final phase prior to 1949 are *Matalanché* (1924) by Peruvian Enrique López Albújar and Venezuelan Rómulo Gallegos' *Pobre negro* (1937). Menton marks the first NHN as Alejo Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo* (1949), a modern novel that encompasses an experimentation with language and utilization of various historical figures key to the Haitian Revolution. While Menton asserts the NHN did not develop into a dominant literary trend until the 1970s, Carpentier's 1949 novel is heralded as "the pioneering New Historical Novel" (20; my emphasis).

El reino posits a subordination of (Haitian) history to the moral question addressing the humanist will, against all odds, to struggle for freedom and justice. An analysis of *El reino* in this chapter, then, responds to its crucial role as a novel that represents a turning point, not only for the subgenre of historical novels but also as a prime example of a modern novel that enlists a baroque vocabulary and countless historical and fictional characters. If this chapter is rooted in literature's interest in addressing historical revisionism(s), where do *Changó* and *La fiesta del chivo* fit? While the alignment of these two later novels to the NHN are not as pellucid as *El reino*, both authors and/or novels are mentioned in Menton's foundational study. *Changó* itself is not included in Menton's study, but Zapata Olivella's 1986 *El fusilamiento del diablo* is. This earlier novel by Zapata Olivella is marked as a "not so new historical novel" or, rather, a

novel with historical aspects that do not satisfactorily include the six NHN characteristics. Menton's collocation of Zapata Olivella's *El fusilamiento del diablo* within an "almost, but not quite" category confirms Menton's decision to deny the Afro-Colombian's texts categorization as "historical novels," a negation that led to critic Sonja Stephenson Watson's article "*Changó, el gran putas*: Contemporary Afro-Hispanic Historical Novel." In this article, Stephenson Watson creates a new vestige of the historical novel, with its own unique set of characteristics in which Afro-Hispanic writers' works can be included. Other critics such as Antonio D. Tillis, most specifically in his article "*Changó el gran putas*: A Postmodern Historiographic Metafictional Text," also emphasize the role of history in *Changó*. This chapter moves away from arguing for or against *Changó's* status as historical novel, and instead looks to read the play between fiction and reality in this novel alongside two others that, likewise, re-envision Hispaniola's history. Additionally, in the section specifically centered on *Changó* and its alternate visioning of the Haitian Revolution, Afro-Hispanic writers and their in/exclusion as writers of NHN's and members of the Latin American literary canon is expanded.

Vargas Llosa's *La guerra del fin del mundo* (1981) merits the classification as NHN and garners the attention of an entire chapter, titled "Mario Vargas Llosa's *War on Fanaticism*." *La fiesta del chivo*, published in 2000 after Menton traced the NHN as a dominant literary trend, offers many similarities to *La guerra del fin del mundo*. These similarities include a distortion of historical events and the utilization of famous historical characters as protagonists. A commonality *La guerra del fin del mundo* shares with not only many other NHN's but also the majority of literary texts analyzed in this dissertation

is the confrontation of an “absolute truth,” or the recognition that one single interpretation of history is non-existent. Menton refers to this *Weltanschauung*, a pillar of the novel, as “in keeping with the tenets of postmodernism, and in keeping with Mikhail Bakhtin’s concepts of the dialogic and the polyphonic” (40). An emphasis on the impossibility of a single truth is key to Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past*, rooted in Haiti’s disavowed black revolutionary history. While Menton and his *Latin America’s New Historical Novel* do not occupy the primary critical attention of this chapter, the fact all three Latin American novels and/or authors reflecting on and re-writing Hispaniola’s history analyzed in the following pages can be read alongside or against the delineation of the NHN serves as an ideal starting point. This project’s interest in historical revisionism as related to Hispaniola – primarily an alternate understanding via literature of the Haitian (as historically understood and constructed in the Dominican Republic) – challenges Menton’s claim and conjecture at the end of the first chapter that the Latin American NHN “has already produced some truly outstanding works that deserve to be on everybody’s canonical list in 1992, and will perhaps continue to be on everybody’s canonical list in 2092” (38). How can one reassess not only the NHN in its relation to underrepresented groups, but also re-visualize the Latin American literary canon and the place of Dominican and Dominican American writers within it?

While a keen interest in the history of Hispaniola unites *El reino*, *Changó*, and *La fiesta*, other characteristics and themes repeated in all three novels serve as points of contact and comparison. Especially salient is the utilization of famous historical figures as protagonists (also a pillar of the Latin American NHN). *El reino* presents literary caricatures of figures central to the Haitian Revolution including Mackandal, Bouckman,

Henri Christophe, Touissant Louverture, Jean Jacques Dessalines, and Jean-Pierre Boyer, among others. The third chapter of *Changó* offers fictional portrayals of myriad (black) heroes of the Haitian Revolution, while the novel in its entirety incorporates a range of other Latin American “great men of history” (Menton 24) including Venezuelan *libertador* Simón Bolívar and Colombian military leader José Prudencio Padilla. Shifting gears (and fast-forwarding to the twentieth century), *La fiesta del chivo* centers on the infamous Dominican dictator, Rafael Leónidas Trujillo. While the historically engrained protagonists and the historical focus shift across these three texts, one shared protagonist is the geographical space itself: Hispaniola. Beyond its singularity as a physical, “mappable” space, Hispaniola is, (aside from Saint Martin), the only other landmass in the Caribbean shared by two nations. The Island boasts the highest mountain peak in the Antilles (Pico Duarte) and is home to four distinct eco-regions. Hispaniola’s history is also distinctive. The Island is defined by, among other historical events, a Revolution that re-defined the entire Caribbean colonial structure with a global impact, occupations and unifications of the Island, and ethnic genocides (namely the 1937 Haitian Massacre), events that unequivocally link the Island’s history to themes of oppression and rebellion.

While these themes are not unique to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, their recurrence in Carpentier’s, Zapata Olivella’s, and Vargas Llosas’s novels serve as ideal points of analysis in the pages to follow. Furthermore, the replications of both oppression and rebellion signal the “pulse” of Hispaniola, or its ability to draw others into its history *and* reality. The election of a Cuban, Colombian, and Peruvian author to fasten their gaze on the Island’s past speaks to the shared traits of not only the Caribbean, but of Latin America, commonalities highlighted in Antonio Benítez Rojo’s *La isla que se repite*.

Benítez Rojo charts the Caribbean experience as a shared one, referencing the common currents of transculturation, *mestizaje*, religious syncretism, and more.²⁷ Hispaniola, in this way, can be read as a metaphor representing a porous and fluid border, a gateway to formulating a new understanding of other Latin American countries.

Kingdom of (Carpentier's) World

Carpentier deals with contexts. I deal with texts. The context in Carpentier is well known in advance, not only territory explored, but even mapped out and illustrated.
Guillermo Cabrera Infante²⁸

In Roberto González Echevarría's seminal study *Myth and Archive* there is a repeated reference to what the author labels "the central enabling delusion of Latin American writing: the notion that in the New World a new start can be made" (4). Hispaniola is the literal and figurative "point of departure" of the New World. As mentioned, it is an Island of firsts: the first black republic, the first American university, and the first colony to import African slaves. However "delusional" the initial thought professed by González Echevarría may be, that the space of the New World permits new beginnings, if a fresh start can be made to any extent, where better than on the island of Hispaniola? It is perhaps this desire to begin anew that has allured and continues to allure many Caribbean writers to the history of Hispaniola. Carpentier, for example, proved enthralled by Haiti's unique culture and history after his visit in 1943 and he remained

²⁷ Sklodowska warns against this model of points of contact between the Caribbean region in chapter five of *Espectros y espejismos*, titled "La isla que no se repite." She notes that "las culturas de la diáspora africana no pueden reducirse a un denominador común" (207).

²⁸ M. Rodríguez, "Las fuentes de la narración" 45. (Interview with Guillermo Cabrera Infante).

deeply intellectually immersed in the country for the rest of his literary career. Although it is important to remember that the development of any one country is inextricably tied to its respective history, it is equally important to consider why non-Haitian or Dominican authors are intrigued by Hispaniola's history. The indisputable source of interest for Carpentier in *El reino de este mundo* is the Haitian Revolution. Furthermore, to return to the idea professed above concerning Latin America as a "point of departure" and Hispaniola as a land of "firsts," Carpentier, too, is an author representative of precursory value. This prolific author not only introduced the world to the "real marvelous," or *lo real maravilloso*, but his novels are marked as predecessors to the literary movement known as the Latin American Boom and his work is constantly referenced as the bridge to new literary movements or genres such as the New Historical Novel.

Carpentier's interest in the Haitian Revolution, given the geographical proximity of his native Cuba and Haiti, is no surprise, especially as the aftermath of the tumultuous event reverberated with its greatest force in the Caribbean. According to David P. Geggus, news of the Revolution travelled quickly. Within a mere month of the 1791 uprising "slaves in Jamaica were singing songs about it" and in late 1795, the governor of Cuba lamented that the name of the revolt's leader, Jean-François Papillon, "resounded in the ears of the populace like an invincible hero and savior of the slaves" (x). Alluding to the economic and social consequences of the momentous event in the Caribbean, slave owners in Cuba and Puerto Rico (despite the fact their slave populations at the time remained relatively small) were forced to debate the attraction of the world market at such a critical juncture while also weighing the dangers of expanding slave-based

agriculture (Geggus xii). Jan Carew, in an essay entitled “The Caribbean Writer and Exile” (1980), points to the commonalities of the Caribbean writer and notes that he or she

is compelled by the exigencies of history to move back and forth from the heart of those cultural survivals and others into whatever regions of the twentieth century the island, the continent or the cosmos his imagination encompasses; and, in roaming across the ages of man in this bloodstained hemisphere, he must penetrate into the unfathomable silences. (33)

If one approaches the history of Haiti, (in particular the Haitian Revolution), the existence of “unfathomable silences” is undeniable, and it is clear in the analysis to follow that such “silences” entrapped the imagination(s) of a plethora of Caribbean and Latin American writers, including Alejo Carpentier.²⁹

El reino de este mundo is an especially important text to examine when considering the intersections between a literary work and historical investigation as Carpentier attempts to approach African religion – namely vodou – and the Haitian Revolution while attributing to the slaves the role of agents and informants (instead of the “silenced” objects of study). The analysis to follow of Carpentier’s *El reino de este mundo* begins with a focused interest in the Cuban’s 1943 trip to Haiti, while also noting the author’s earlier interest in the island of Hispaniola. The following paragraphs look at the organization of the novel, a topic of great interest to Carpentinian scholars and critics, and posit the representation of *lo real maravilloso* as key to the work’s structure. Finally,

²⁹ Carpentier is identified by Márquez Rodríguez as “el iniciador” of “nueva narrativa latinoamericana” (17). Furthermore, the publication of *El reino de este mundo* in 1949 is commonly considered as a precursor to the “Boom” in Latin American literature, followed years after by structurally similar novels such as Julio Cortázar’s *Rayuela* (1963), Mario Vargas Llosa’s *La ciudad y los perros* (1964), and Gabriel García Márquez’s *Cien años de soledad* (1967).

the themes of oppression and resistance in *El reino de este mundo* are addressed, focusing on the wider, humanistic scope of the novel's burgeoning philosophical endnote.

Carpentier was drawn to Haiti and its unique culture and history after his first visit to the country in 1943. Critic Alexis Márquez Rodríguez signals the magnitude of this specific adventure for the author, labeling it “un episodio de enorme trascendencia en su vida” (22). Numerous other critics have alluded to the importance of travel for the author. After Carpentier returned from his brief residence in Paris in 1939, he lived exclusively in Cuba until 1945. This period, however, was broken by two impactful trips: one to Haiti in 1943 and another to Mexico in 1945 (González Echevarría, *Pilgrim* 97). As noted in the prologue to *El reino de este mundo*, it is during this trip to Haiti that Carpentier visited historical monuments such as the Citadelle Laferrière and the Sans-Souci Palace, as well as the city of Cap-Haitien.³⁰ Critic Myrna Nieves charts the importance the author himself attributed to his travels:

Desde temprano en su carrera, Carpentier se ha destacado por su interés en los viajes, tanto literales como literarios. Ya en mayo 1923, publicó en la revista cubana *Chic* una narración titulada “El Sacrificio”, una “historia fantástica” protagonizada por “Ulrico el Temerario, rudo vikingo e incansable navegante, pirata a veces y defensor de los justos según el caso”. “El Sacrificio”, que es la primera narración de Carpentier, refleja ya su interés por personajes que viajan, en este caso un navegante. (47)

The fact that Carpentier's first story protagonized a Viking travelling the world can be understood as an early precursor signaling the author's lifelong interest in travel. As Nieves notes, for Carpentier, these travels were not only literary ones, but personal as well, and it is the intertwining of the two that is a primary source of interest for many readers and critics.

³⁰ E.J. Rodríguez notes that an earlier version of this prologue was published shortly before *El reino de este mundo* in *El Nacional* in Caracas (165).

The year 1943, however, did not mark Carpentier's first interest in the island of Hispaniola. As E.J. Rodríguez notes, the author's first mention of Haiti in a newspaper appeared in a Havana paper. This article, titled "Leyes de África," was followed shortly after by two articles dealing explicitly with Haitian culture: "Nuevas luces sobre el vodú" and "Panorama del arte haitiano" (161).³¹ Furthermore, Hispaniola (namely colonial Santo Domingo) merits a fleeting reference in the author's short story "Semejante a la noche," written in the early 1940s but not published until 1958 in the short story collection *Guerra del tiempo*. Carpentier's career as a columnist left its mark in numerous Latin American newspapers, primarily in Venezuela and Cuba. The author, most notably, had a widely read column in the Caracas-based newspaper *El Nacional* titled "Letra y Solfa." Carpentier's journalistic production is rooted in physical spaces, and as critic E.J. Rodríguez notes, his columns often emphasized "geographical areas, cities, and territories that moved him," further observing that "emotions evocated by other geographical spaces *previously* visited are apparent" in his journalistic production (152). While *El reino de este mundo* represents a non-journalistic text of Carpentier that also responds to a specific geographical space visited by the author himself, it is not indicative of the only trip that inspired a novel-length work for the author. On the contrary, the impact of Carpentier's travels is also evidenced in *Los pasos perdidos* (1953), heavily based on two trips he made to the Venezuelan jungle in 1947 and 1948. The parallels between journalistic writing and narrative are clarified in his travel chronicles "Visión de América" that was

³¹ E.J. Rodríguez mentions that an attempt to chronicle Carpentier's journalistic texts is in effect. *Crónicas* was published in Havana in two volumes with a selection of texts published in various magazines in Cuba by Carpentier (*Haiti*). There is also a study of Carpentier's articles written between 1923 and 1949 by Adolfo Cruz-Luis, "Latinoamérica en Carpentier: génesis de lo real maravilloso."

in part copied directly into *Los pasos perdidos*. The author's travels over the span of one decade – 1940 to 1950 – speak to his understanding of an overarching Caribbean character, “character” that expanded to areas not traditionally considered part of the Caribbean region, as Mexico and Venezuela are often viewed as geographic outliers and Haiti a linguistic and cultural outlier. The emphasis on travel and geographic space in Carpentier's literary and journalistic production of the 1940s is also a reflection of the desire to foster a shared Latin American identity or consciousness during this same time frame. González Echevarría confirms that “the forties was a period of search for Latin American consciousness and for the foundations of a literature of its own, distinct from that of Europe” (*Pilgrim* 99). An important claim to a unified Latin American identity in the 1940s is voiced by Dominican Pedro Henríquez Ureña's “Historia de la cultura en la América Hispánica” (1947) and “Las corrientes literarias en la América Hispánica” (1949). Both essays attempt to engender a historical and cultural unity of Latin America at-large. Another work published in the forties, a structural approach to Cuban history that offers a distinct vision of the Caribbean and Latin America, is Fernando Ortiz's seminal *Contrapunteo cubano del tabaco y el azúcar* (1940). Ortiz's study details the process – “transculturación” – that merges heterogeneous cultural elements into a common civilization.

El reino de este mundo was written and published during a time of political instability and economic uncertainties for Haiti, just after the US military occupation of Haiti (1915-34) and shortly before François Duvalier was elected president in 1957. According to E.J. Rodríguez, the Cuban author's “peculiar relationship with Haitian history and culture can be observed throughout his production. While the first signs of his

attraction to that neighboring country appear in an article published in 1931, it was his trip to Haiti in 1943, that enhanced his enthusiasm” (161). It is in the aforementioned prologue of *El reino de este mundo* that the impact of Haiti on the author materializes in full, confirming that it was in Haiti where he found himself in daily contact with *lo real maravilloso*, a movement defined by Natalie M. Léger as “an articulation of a real and, at times, historically verifiable American occurrence that appears so fantastic and inconceivable that it defies reason and, as such, is perceivable only through Afro-Caribbean spiritual conviction” (86-87). In *El reino de este mundo*, this “real marvelous” can be understood as an appeal to both faith and history, González Echevarría clarifying that it is the search for the marvelous “buried beneath the surface of Latin American consciousness, where African drums still beat...” (*Pilgrim* 123).

To delve deeper into the beginnings of *lo real maravilloso* is, in part, to decipher what the movement is *not*. The “real marvelous” is often set against, (and perhaps all too often aligned with), two other literary movements: Surrealism and magical realism. While in Surrealism there is traditionally a rejection of reality in order to instead embrace magical or marvelous elements and in magical realism there is an underlying emphasis on invention or creation of particular magical aspects in literature by the author, *lo real maravilloso* is unique as the marvelous forms part of reality, of everyday life.³² Márquez Rodríguez asserts that the “real marvelous” “se trata de que el prodigio, la maravilla, lo mágico está en la propia realidad circundante, en lo tangible del mundo americano, en lo que el hombre percibe a su alrededor” (45). Thus, while the three movements share the

³² See Franz Roh’s article that examines the term “magical realism” and considers the “marvelous” as rooted in Surrealism: “Realismo mágico: problemas de la pintura europea más reciente.”

existence of a “marvelous” element, any categorization of Carpentier’s narrative as magical realism is erroneous, as *lo real maravilloso* is not dependent upon invention or a skewing of reality. Carpentier found in Haiti the ideal place for this exclusively Latin American concept and “marvelous American reality.” The author expands on the relevance of his 1943 trip to Haiti in his 1967 essay published in *Tientos y diferencias* which can be read as an amendment to or addition to his first delineation of *lo real maravilloso* in 1949, noting that his experience in Haiti “fue para mí como una revelación” (44). Later in the same essay Carpentier references “el nada mentido sortilegio de las tierras de Haití” (114). The importance of location in regards to where the “marvelous” in the Americas resides or coalesces is of utmost importance, Márquez Rodríguez agreeing that “la ‘ubicación’ de esa esencia maravillosa en la realidad Americana” is the very force that inscribes itself in the literary materialization of *lo real maravilloso*, “a la cual impregna tanto en su dimensión natural, como en la humana, social e histórica” (55). The fact that the roots of Carpentier’s “marvelous American reality” are grounded firmly in Haitian history and culture serves to re-situate and thus elevate Haiti within the Caribbean and Latin America.

While the differences between Carpentier’s “real marvelous” and magical realism are often convoluted, the thematic or chronological fragmentation of *El reino* represents yet another source of debate among scholars. At a basic level, the novel recounts a domino effect of rebellions and societal upheavals in Haiti spanning approximately 57 years from 1764 to 1821. The core of *El reino* is chronological and the narrated events follow a logical, historical record, but there are also unexplained time gaps and sporadic descriptions of seemingly insignificant events. This piecing together of

Haiti's history results in a chaotic, frenzied narrative reflective of a "disorganized organization." The novel is, however, separated into four separate untitled parts with eight, seven, seven, and four sections, respectively. González Echevarría's analysis of the novel's structure in *Pilgrim at Home* is the most exhaustive to date, suggesting that the entire work models a numerological and symbolic system. González Echevarría's cyclical organization of Carpentier's novel is not the only attempt to put order to the chaos. Márquez Rodríguez, for example, parses the novel into six general historical movements (1. Mackandal and the initial slave rebellions; 2. Bouckman and Bois Caiman; 3. The presence of Napoleon's wife Paulina Bonaparte; 4. Henri Christophe and the construction of his empire; 5. Christophe's widow in Rome, and finally; 6. The physical and mental deterioration of Ti Noel). Klaus Muller-Bergh instead condenses these historical, thematic pulses to four, as does Selena Millares, focusing on the following four episodes: the colonial era (Mackandal), the colonial era (Boukman), the post-colonial era and fall of Henri Christophe, and the re-establishment of republican government. Emil Volek further compresses the divisions in the novel, concluding there are only two. Regardless of the fragmentation or division of the novel, the "real marvelous" pervades each section, a defining aspect of Haiti (and Latin America) during each historical phase.

As literary critic Steven M. Bell notes, the fame of the prologue often supersedes the novel itself (29).³³ In the prologue, Carpentier approaches the composition of the novel and his documentation of events, confirming that he "allowed the marvelous to

³³ The fame of said prologue began with the publication of *El reino* in 1949, but the more seminal positioning of the essay came later, when it was reprinted in *Tientos y diferencias* (1964).

flow freely.” This “free flow” of *lo real maravilloso* confirms that the “marvelous” cannot be extracted or removed from the history of the Haitian Revolution, instead it is a defining, entrenched factor of the historical events themselves. With the wide dissemination of the prologue in mind, it is worthwhile to look more closely at Carpentier’s own description of *lo real maravilloso* in the pages prior to *El reino*. As the author himself notes in the prologue, the text is reflective of a “minucioso cotejo de fechas y cronologías” (16) and, evidence of his command of Haitian history, there is not one event straying from historical record.³⁴ This careful re-creation of a historical record of events, however, is not coupled with specific dates.³⁵ According to González Echevarría, there is only one full date ever mentioned in the text, August 15 (*Pilgrim*). (This sole date appears in part III of Chapter 5 and refers to the day Henri Christophe suffers a quasi-stroke). Carpentier’s centering of his search for a (Latin) American consciousness in Haiti via the impossible-to-ignore pulse of the marvelous he witnessed during his trip to the country in 1943 re-contextualizes Haitian history, positioning the events of the Haitian Revolution as a possible metaphor for the Latin American experience.

The root of Carpentier’s fascination with Haiti is undoubtedly, as mentioned previously, the Haitian Revolution, (including the events leading up to it, such as

³⁴ See chapter two of *Pasos hallados en El Reino de este mundo* by Emma Susana Speratti-Piñero for a more in-depth study of the historical sources utilized by Carpentier, including *Drums of Dambala* (1932) by Henry Bedford-Jones (based on Toussaint) or *Babouk: Voices of Resistance* by Guy Endore.

³⁵ The accuracy of the historical events included in *El reino* is confirmed by González Echevarría who notes that “the entire text of the story, or very nearly, could be set against some historical text” (*Pilgrim* 135) and does a reading of two passages of the novel against historical texts of the era (133-34). This reading suggests *El reino* is a superimposition and/or collation of historical texts.

Mackandal's rebellion and the vodou ceremony at Bois Caiman), the author producing for his readers an alternative account of the event. A large part of the narration of *El reino* is seen through the eyes of Ti Noel, a plantation slave and, later, an unpaid worker for Rei Henri Christophe during the construction of the Citadelle. The selection of Ti Noel, an illiterate slave of African ancestry, for the novel's key player allows for different definitions and interpretations of the Revolution. According to Haitian American writer Edwidge Danticat, "Carpentier shows with his skillful handling of this narrative how revolutions assign us all sides, shaming the conquerors and fortifying the oppressed, and in some cases achieving the opposite" (*Create Dangerously* 102). At the same time that Carpentier's literary rendering of the Revolution follows the day-to-day exploits of a slave, the historical research that went into the production of the novel – mentioned previously – is of utmost importance. It is considered the "only sustained account of the Haitian Revolution in Spanish-Caribbean literature," even more than a half-century after its publication (Paravisini-Gerbet 115).

While Haiti itself can be viewed as the protagonist of *El reino*, the peasant slave Ti Noel is the closest the text comes to a human protagonist, as his role as witness to the various phases of Haiti's colonial and post-colonial (republic) history spans from his childhood to eventual death (or metamorphosis) at the end of the novel.³⁶ The Ti Noel character may serve to connect the different parts of the novel, but the novel refrains from

³⁶ It is important to note that Carpentier is among many Cuban writers whose work is evidence of "la presencia tangible de Haití en Cuba – producto de dos grandes oleadas migratorias y de los continuos nexos culturales, políticos y socioeconómicos entre ambos países" (Sklodowska 13). Other Cuban writers who position Haiti in the role of protagonist, to list a few, are Mayra Montero, Marta Rojas, and Pablo Armando Fernández (Sklodowska 14), not to mention the Cuban poet Nicolás Guillén. Sklodowska's study mentioned previously details the representation of Haiti in the Cuban imaginary and delves more extensively into this topic.

focusing solely on the peasant. His trajectory in the novel is not an extraordinary, heroic one. He is no Mackandal or Boukman. Ti Noel begins the novel as a slave of Lenormand de Mezy, plantation master in the *Llanura del Norte*. Later, he hears of Mackandal's poisoning of cattle and the arrival of the French Revolution. When the blacks rise up against their French masters in response to Boukman's call for rebellion at Bois Caimán, Ti Noel participates, also violating Lenormand de Mezy's wife. After the first large-scale slave revolt in 1791, Ti Noel travels to Santiago de Cuba after Haitian independence is won where he, according to Spanish law, is still a slave. When he returns to Haiti years later, Ti Noel is one of many unpaid workers on the construction of Henri Christophe's palace in Sans Souci. In the final pages of *El reino*, Ti Noel returns to the ruined home of Lenormand de Mezy where he, in a delirious state, believes he is a King and has his own court. The disenchantment of Ti Noel at the end of the novel serves as a unique response to the themes of rebellion and oppression that define the historical events of the Haitian Revolution.

The majority of characters in *El reino* are, unsurprisingly, historical, but the inclusion of fictitious characters,³⁷ most notably Ti Noel, is key. In regards to the latter, “la vida larguísima de Ti Noel lo convierte a veces en testigo de hechos presentados en la obra” (Sperrati-Piñero 57). If Ti Noel, then, can be read as a prototype of a black slave during the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century in Haiti,³⁸ his significance as a “universal man” is revelatory. His disenchantment with mankind at the novel's end

³⁷ It is in large part due to the addition of fictional characters that critic Salvador Bueno disagrees with the term “novela histórica” to refer to the novel. He instead suggests “crónica de legendaria” of Haitian history, in this way referencing the existence of fictitious characters like Ti Noel, Solimán, and others.

³⁸ Sperrati-Piñero suggests that Ti Noel's character offers “rasgos representativos de un grupo humano” (57).

positions human existence as an endless burden: “Ti Noel ve que no hay libertad en el mundo. Se metamorfosea en distintos animales buscando libertad pero encuentra que tampoco existe en el reino animal. Por fin se vuelve buitre y desaparece en lo verde del Bois Caimán” (Sánchez Boudy 75). I want to look specifically at Ti Noel’s possible metamorphosis into a vulture that ends the novel to consider the extent to which it shifts or manipulates the commentary on the impossibility of freedom or the inability to completely remove the shackles of oppression.

Por más que pensara, Ti Noel no veía la manera de ayudar a los súbditos nuevamente encorvados bajo la tralla de alguien. El anciano comenzaba a desesperarse ante ese inacabable retoñar de cadenas, ese renacer de grillos, esa proliferación de miserias, que los más resignados acababan por aceptar como prueba de inutilidad de toda rebeldía. Ti Noel temió que también le hicieran trabajar sobre los surcos, a pesar de su edad. Por ello, el recuerdo de Mackandal volvió a imponerse en su memoria. Ya que la vestidura de hombre solía traer tantas calamidades, más valía despojarse de ella por un tiempo, siguiendo los acontecimientos de la Llanura bajo aspectos menos llamativos. Tomada esa decisión, Ti Noel se sorprendió de lo fácil que es transformarse en animal cuando se tienen poderes para ello. Como prueba se trepó a un árbol, quiso ser ave, y al punto fué ave. Miró a los Agrimensores desde lo alto de una rama, metiendo el pico en la pula violada de un caimito. (190)

The above passage recounts Ti Noel’s first out-of-body experience, following in the example of the rebel slave and leader of the rebellion Mackandal when he converts into an insect before being burned at the stake.³⁹ Ti Noel confronts the harsh realities of life at every stage, finally understanding that “el hombre nunca sabe para quién padece y

³⁹ Literary accounts of Mackandal’s public death vary; Carpentier’s and Zapata Olivella’s depictions represent not the French perception of a slave being burned at the stake, but instead the memories of Africans who witnessed Mackandal’s transformation and escape. When Carpentier references Mackandal’s death he notes that Mackandal has the power to transform into various different animals and confirms that Mackandal roamed the earth in many different forms: “Todos sabían que la iguana verde, la mariposa nocturna, el perro desconocido, el alcatraz inverosímil, no eran simples disfraces. Dotado del poder de transformarse en animal de pezuña, en ave, pez o insecto, Mackandal visitaba continuamente las haciendas de la Llanura...” (37).

espera. Padece y espera y trabaja para gentes que nunca conocerá” (197). For Ti Noel, oppression is real and long lasting, unavoidable and without end; liberty or freedom are positioned as unachievable utopic goals. Ti Noel’s make-believe world that closes the novel, with his own “court” and feigned materialistic delicacies, is greeted by a harsh reality. This wake-up call of sorts affirms that a utopian environment cannot and does not exist in the real world, every man instead is forced to exist as a scavenger or scrounger, taking what he can from others, corroborating why Ti Noel closes the novel as a “buitre mojado, aprovechador de toda muerte” (198).⁴⁰ This philosophical end point re-positions the novel’s underlying thematic representation of oppression and rebellion, showing how the oppressive elements of society are never completely eradicated.

Manuel Zapata Olivella’s Dual Erasure

La historia de la República de Haití para los olvidados escribas de la Loba será siempre la masacre de los negros fanatizados por el odio contra sus hermanos blancos, nunca el genocidio de los esclavistas contra un pueblo indefenso.
Manuel Zapata Olivella⁴¹

The theme of place is always important in the fiction of Zapata Olivella. The author takes a geographical construct, either real or fictitious, and exploits it in order to reveal the story of a people who are intimately tied to it for the purpose of exposing realities of that people’s existence through fiction.
Antonio D. Tillis⁴²

Afro-Colombian Manuel Zapata Olivella’s third chapter of his bestseller, *Changó, el gran putas*, writes against two silenced spheres. The common thread to Zapata

⁴⁰ A vast majority of Carpentinian scholars agree the vulture that flies into Bois Caimán is indeed Ti Noel, perhaps signaling the continuation of the spirit of rebellion. See Young page 63 for a list.

⁴¹ *Changó*, 314.

⁴² *Manuel Zapata Olivella and the Darkening of Latin American Literature*, 64.

Olivella's literary corpus – from his first novel *Tierra mojada* (1949) or *Chambacú, corral de negros* (1963), to his later works *¡Levántate mulato!* (1990), and *Hemingway, el cazador de la muerte* (1993) – is his placement of black Latin Americans, *mulatos*, and the impoverished poor at center stage. Zapata Olivella's election to portray the black diasporic community offers representation to an oppressed community “excluded from national discourse” (Stephenson Watson 71). Giving voice to populations either left out completely in literature of the twentieth century or positioned from a “less-than” perspective, Zapata Olivella curates a sense of “global blackness.” Laurence E. Prescott and Anotonio D. Tillis, in an introduction to a special monographic issue of the *Afro-Hispanic Review* dedicated to the critical study of Zapata Olivella's literary legacy, address how this context of global blackness or global immersion engages the reader “throughout the African diaspora in search of discernible elements that unite the experiences of world citizens embellishing the vibrancy and history of select geographical spaces” (10). One of the “select geographical spaces” in *Changó* is Hispaniola, or, more specifically, Haiti before the Haitian Revolution, a historical episode also traditionally silenced. Trouillot's *Silencing the Past* traces the one-sidedness of history and the study is centered in the “silences” within the process of historical production of the “forgotten figure of the Haitian Revolution” (27). While many scholars agree the event – commonly regarded as the single most important historical event in Latin American history – has been silenced, Sibylle Fischer challenges this “silencing.” In the preface and introduction to *Modernity Disavowed*, Fischer notes: “silences only show up against some sort of discursive background” (x). Despite the continuing dialogue surrounding the “silence,” *Changó* writes against or over two points of erasure

and depicts blacks as part of a national (*and* global) history while at the same time elevating the events of the Haitian Revolution to their proper place within the annals of world history.

Although *Changó* is self-categorized by the author himself as his greatest literary achievement, on which numerous articles, monographs, and presentations have centered, the work's unabridged derailment of chronology and a constantly shifting narrative voice make the postmodern text more manageable to analyze with a specific focus or chapter in mind. For the purpose of the present study, interested in historical revisionism and alternate understandings of the history of Hispaniola, the third chapter that (re)-writes the events leading up to the Revolution in Haiti merits critical attention. After looking at the text on a more general scale and considering its popularity and overall impact, this section follows the same framework as the analysis of Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo*, first framing the author's interest in Hispaniola, then addressing the organization of the text and Hispaniola's role within it, and finally contextualizing the themes of oppression and rebellion in the work.

To summarize *Changó* in its entirety is not an easy feat. Over 700 pages long, the text at the most rudimentary level offers a postcolonial literary history of the African diaspora. This history, however, while reflecting the twentieth century struggles of blacks, boasts ample cultural, social, and political context that dips back in time to the displacement or exile of Africans in the New World. Much like Glissant begins his *Poetics of Relation* with a shared history of those oppressed by colonialism by revisiting the experience of deportation to the Americas, Zapata Olivella's *Changó's* point of departure is an epic poem rooted in the oral tradition detailing the genesis that bore the

creation of the African world and its diaspora. This song or story of African origins beginning the hybrid literary work is addressed to “the fellow traveler,” inviting readers to board the slave ship and accompany the characters, the *mntu*, and leave his/her western culture behind (xviii). Each of the five separate but intercalated chapters of the postmodern and postcolonial *Changó* decentralizes Western discourse: “The Origins” centers on how Changó cursed and exiled the *mntu*; “The American *mntu*” narrates the middle passage; “The Voudou Rebellion” (examined in greater detail in the pages to follow) positions the slave rising in Saint Domingue as one of the most (if not the most) important historical events in Latin America; “Found Bloodlines” focuses more specifically on the abolition of slavery in the Americas; and the final chapter, “Ancestral Combatants,” contextualizes the United States as an integral piece of the African diaspora with a history of repeated struggles for black emancipation and equality. Zapata Olivella considers the work his literary masterpiece, a text for which all novels and essays preceding it served as “warm-ups.”⁴³ It is also the text that opened a new space for the prolific Colombian author within the Latin American literary canon, alongside fellow Colombians Gabriel García Márquez and Jorge Isaacs (neither of whom are of African descent). Manuel Zapata Olivella’s relatively new induction into the canon is in part thanks to Richard Jackson’s *Black Writers in Latin America* (1979), in which he bestows to Zapata Olivella the title of “dean of Black Hispanic writers.” Other contributions and worthwhile recognitions of Zapata Olivella’s literary corpus include the work of Lawrence Prescott, Raymond Williams, Antonio D. Tillis, William Luis, and others.

⁴³ Some of Zapata Olivella’s other works include: anthropological studies, *La identidad del afro en América Latina* (1977), *La rebelión de los genes* (1997), ethnology: *Las claves mágicas de América* (1989), novel *Chambacú: corral de negros* (1963), *relatos he visto la noche* (1953) and *¡Levántate mulato!* (1990).

Likewise, most critics agree that as more of Zapata Olivella's works are translated he will begin to reach a wider, increasingly global audience.⁴⁴

Zapata Olivella's mythical construction of the African diaspora in *Changó* spans beyond any regional focus and instead succeeds in promulgating a global approach to blackness. Prescott and Tillis refer to this worldwide perspective as a "global immersion" (10), noting that geographical spaces including, but not limited to, Africa, Haiti, the United States, China, Mexico, and Guatemala become protagonists in Zapata Olivella's works. While *Changó*'s scope is undoubtedly global, Zapata Olivella's earlier works, such as *Chambacú, corral de negros* (1963) and *En Chimá nace un santo* (1964), are traditionally regarded as regionalist. This regional focus (with extra-regional impact) reflects the trend in 1940s and 1950s in Hispanic letters, and I would argue that even his earlier works can be read as precursors of the transitional period between regionalism and global postmodernism more prominent in the 1960s. We should note, however, that even allegedly regional works such as *Chambacú* and *En Chimá nace un santo* have global implications, pushing and expanding boundaries and borderlines.⁴⁵ While Zapata Olivella's earlier works are rooted in addressing the social, political, and economic realities of poor Afro-Colombians, his later works further extend this reach, focusing on

⁴⁴ Prescott and Tillis confirm Zapata Olivella's rise in popularity: "...it is safe to say that his contribution to world literature is in an explosive state, a 'Boom,' as translations of his texts over the past few decades and a number of critical publications on his works have expanded his readership and encouraged the accessibility of his publications to audiences of many languages spoken around the world" (13-14). I should also mention there are numerous English translations of *Changó*. The most recent translation, *Chango, The Biggest Badass* by Jonathan Tittler, including an introduction by William Luis, is the version I use here.

⁴⁵ The geographic complexity of Colombia is worthy of note, as it lends an almost global-perspective to Colombian literature. See Raymond L. William's *The Colombian Novel: 1844-1987* (1991).

the same realities of oppressed peoples. The difference enlies in the fact these later works exhibit oppressed, subaltern peoples pertaining to a community that expands to the entire African diaspora. This notion of the expansion or manipulation of a border is key to the present study, as it furthers the idea of a border as flexible and multiple, related to the alternate reading and rendering of the Haitian-Dominican border in later chapters. Just like these Dominican and Dominican American texts, Zapata Olivella's counter-narration of black reality in the Americas does not obey political or cultural boundaries. Zapata Olivella's work, though, does not just defy physical, geographical boundaries, but also metaphorical ones; Zapata Olivella's work also crosses cultural and racial borders. *He visto la noche*, for example, is proof that even in the 1950s Zapata Olivella's fictional trajectories garnered an international perspective (Tillis, *Darkening* 45).

The crossover in Zapata Olivella's work from regional to global is perhaps rooted in the author's realization that the experience of the population of African descent in his native Colombia is not unlike that of blacks from other regions of the Americas. Thus, if in works before *Changó* there is an initial shifting of space in which protagonists cross what critic Tillis refers to as "fronteras culturales" (*Darkening* 45), the publication of *Changó* charts a transcultural border (a "frontera transcultural"), rooted in the shared black experience in the Americas. It is the delineation of this transcultural border that answers the question why Zapata Olivella elected to focus on Haiti (and the history of Hispaniola) for an entire chapter of his literary masterpiece. While the author desired to engender a "counternarration of black reality of Latin America" (Tillis, *Darkening* 24), the history of the Haitian Revolution is one traditionally Eurocentric in nature. Zapata Olivella's *Changó* dispels a western vision of (black) history. To address how the third

chapter, focused on the Haitian Revolution, re-writes the traditional history of the event, I want to take a closer look at the scene in which (François) Mackandal (a Haitian Maroon leader in Saint-Domingue and known *houngan*, or vodou priest) is burned at the stake. The first appearance of Mackandal's voice rings triumphant as he insists he was not, nor could he ever be, killed:

I start to trot among the dancers, my invisible arm held high. The musicians accompanied my gait with the sustained rhythm of the Caribbean drums. "Mackandal is not dead!" The French insist they burned me on January twentieth. They repeat the affirmation amidst trumpet calls on the plantations of Lenormand de Mézy where I was a slave. To allay all doubts, they scatter my ashes in the living quarters of Dufrené, where I was held prisoner. But my ekobios know that, transformed into Damballa's snake, I will be triumphantly reborn in the rainbow after every storm. I am the cock who crows at daybreak. (160)

The use of the word "insist" in the passage above, in reference to the insistence of the French that the slave Mackandal was burned (and died) on January 20, alludes to a Eurocentric, westernized historical record. While the dominant version of this historical event *affirms* Mackandal's death, the slave himself confirms his "rank of general in the army of the deceased" (160). This voice speaks to his rebirth, confirming that his warning was true: "There will be no bullet that can kill me, no bayonet capable of taking out my eye, no fire that can cook me" (160). Zapata Olivella is not the only author to envision Mackandal's role in the slave rebellion. Other interpretations abound, including the well-known Carpentier's *El reino de este mundo*, Guy Endore's *Babouk* (1934), Nalo Hopkinson's *The Salt Roads* (2003), and Mikelson Toussaint-Fils' *Les sentiers rouges: Le Messie des îles* (2011). As Luis asserts in his introduction to Jonathan Tittler's recent English translation of *Changó*, Zapata Olivella's rendering of Mackandal's death can be read as a correction to Carpentier's depiction of the same event in *El reino*. The Colombian author's *Changó* offers a variation to *El reino* by making transparent the slave

Mackandal's thought patterns, revealing he lost his arm not from a sugar mill accident but as punishment for a sexual escapade with the plantation master's wife. The above passage from page 160 confirms, as Luis remarks, "Whereas Carpentier attempts to offer a careful reading of the primary historical events that led to the rebellion of slaves in Saint-Domingue... Zapata Olivella's work suggests that Carpentier's novel contains a few significant omissions" ("Introduction" xxiv).

Mackandal is an important character in both Carpentier and Zapata Olivella's literary renderings of the Haitian Revolution, but it should be noted the rebel slave also is the character of interest for Dominican poet Manuel Rueda in *Las metamorfosis de Makandal* (1998). While Rueda opts for a different spelling, the first line of the *poemario* calls on all versions of the slave's spirit: "Macandal. Makandal. Mackandal" (9) and charts his reign as boudaryless: "Espíritu de las dos tierras y los cuatro mares."⁴⁶ Further evidence of Mackandal's historical significance is ethnobotanist Wade Davis', (former professor at Harvard University and current *National Geographic* Explorer-in-Residence), portrayal of Mackandal as the chief propagator of the vodou religion in *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1985). Davis' chapter "Tell my Horse" traces the beginnings of vodou culture in Haiti and posits Mackandal as an integral force in its evolution and expansion. While the inclusion of Mackandal in Davis' study tracing the roots of vodou in Haiti speaks to the integral role the slave played in not only the Revolution, but in his country's religious and cultural origins, his indispensability within the rebellion is also confirmed by the deceased Bouckman on page 158 of *Changó*:

⁴⁶ Rueda's poetic envisionment of Mackandal also speaks to, and pushes against, the division of Hispaniola, "unos cielos que no han de dividirse (9), alkiening the *poemario* to the thematic of Rueda's earlier "Cantos de la frontera" published in *La criatura terrestre* (1963).

...there have always been runaway slaves in rebellion. But among them all, Mackandal was the first to convoke the Indians and blacks against the White Wolf. Before him, nobody thought about black armies, black generals, black kings, or black emperors.

Zapata Olivella's version of the rebellion asserts that Mackandal continued to fight for the oppressed blacks and slaves after death "at the rank of general in the army of the deceased" (160). None of these other interpretations of Mackandal, however, give Mackandal voice as Zapata Olivella does, an author for whom the story of the African diaspora can *only* be told from the perspective of the slaves themselves. The pointed move from an omniscient narrator to various narrative voices allowing certain players in the first slave rebellion to share their perspective of historical events is key. As opposed to Carpentier's interpretation of the same event in *El reino*, Zapata Olivella creates space for the slave to share his own story and Mackandal narrates his own death and afterlife. This bestowal of narrative voice to the slaves themselves also roots *Changó* within a world-view and global scope that few others possess, an emphasis on the cultural, social, and political realities of Afro-Hispanics that extends well beyond any topographical limitations of Zapata Olivella's native Colombia. José Luis Garcés González confirms the importance of slaves sharing their stories: "En *Changó* hablan los esclavos. Así debe ser. La historia debe partir desde sus propias bocas, desde sus propios corazones. Ningún narrador los sustituye con eficacia" (63).

Changó defies genre, and while traditionally classified as a novel, its narrative complexity and experimentation is a true celebration of a hybrid, post-colonial, and post-modern text. While the work mixes genres, it defies categorization within the ranks of Post-Boom literature. As Luis suggests, while *Changó* was originally published in 1983, chronologically aligning the work with literature of the Post-Boom, but due to its

complex and experimental nature, it has more in common with Boom novels of the previous decade(s) such as Vargas Llosa's *La ciudad y los perros* (1963), and Gabriel García Márquez's *Cien años de soledad* (1967) ("Introduction"). In this way, *Changó* illustrates how the Post-Boom and Boom periods are not "sequential literary movements," but overlapping, as "they cohabit and share a common time and space" (Luis, "Introduction" xiii). Thus, while *Changó* is not regarded as a work of traditional nonfiction, nor does it fit neatly within the parameters of Boom or Post-Boom literature, its value as revisionist literature or "historiographic metafiction" (Hutcheon 5) is paramount as it re-writes the history of the African diaspora and addresses the geographic complexity of the populations of African descent throughout the Americas.

At the most basic structural level, *Changó* is a 700 page, five-part hybrid text in which each section or chapter builds on the previous sections. *Changó*, described previously as post-modern in reference to its narrative experimentation and complexity, in large part merits the "post-modern" classification due to its complete deformation of chronological order. The complicated and chaotic (un)structure of the novel speaks to the manipulation of time construed by Zapata Olivella, a conscious effort to intertwine the past and the present to "create a continuum in the struggle of blacks in the diaspora as they progress from slavery to the present time" (Tillis, *Darkening* 78). This complex, chronologically manipulative "continuum" is evident from the very first pages of *Changó*. Garcés González speaks to the contrived chronology in the novel by referencing the non-existence of a true start to the text, stating: "todo principio está antes del principio" (59). The beginning of the hybrid text, then, marked by the epic poem or song "La tierra de los ancestros" challenges the existence of any true "beginning," as

ancestors, Orishas, and other African gods precede any western, post-colonial understanding of “principio.” As the song titled “Shadows of my elders” confirms, the American *mntu* are guided by these *sombras* or shadows whose presence weaves together the shared history of the African diaspora.

Moreover, the un-structured, un-chronological nature of the realities of the African diaspora are reinforced by portrayals of innumerable historical figures. In the third chapter, for example, the protagonists of the Haitian Revolution are multifold; the voice of the maroon Mackandal is accompanied by Bouckman, Toussaint, Dessalines, Petión, and others. Accompanying the various narrative voices is a lack of order of the physical space the various accounts of the slave rebellion take up in the text. The narration jumps from one historical figure to the next, intertwined with the overarching voices and vision of the *mntu*, a collective “we” that drives the narration of the leaders and key players of the Revolution, unifying their stories through the persistent guidance of the vodou Orishas. The narrative voices of the deceased, however, expand beyond recognized key players of the monumental historical event and include, for example, the life story of a *mulata* named Marie-Jeanne born to a white plantation master and an African slave mother. With no place among the freedmen or slaves, she speaks of her life as an “in-between” until she was accosted and beaten by a group of white men and women after Mass, an event that solidified her place on the side of the “rebel Vodous” as opposed to the Christian temples. Marie-Jeanne’s story and her underlying Afro-consciousness enforces the goal of the rebellion crystalized by Mackandal when he shouts: “We Africans will liberate the Indians and mulattos of this island from all

oppression” (159). Yvonne Captain-Hidalgo links this multi-voiced, fragmented narration to African storytelling:

In *Shango* [sic], the storytelling is presented directly as an African way of communicating history and morality. It forms part of what I call the renewed present. It is not merely that the characters alluded to are African, but the very manner of rendering the narrative echoes west African forms of storytelling. The very naming of characters constitutes a recognition and celebration that speaks to the cultural ties among Afro-Americans – bonds rooted in Africa. (126)

While the storytelling is shared between innumerable (black) voices in *Changó*, “the celebration that speaks to the cultural ties among Afro-Americans” is rooted in African religions, the true *hilo conductor* of the 700 page novel. The most palpable link between the multitudinous voices of chapter three, (in addition to the other four chapters), is the African and Yoruba religious traditions – including Haitian vodou.

While the constant pulse of Afro-religions in *Changó* does not clarify any possible chronology, it solidifies a continuum of the experience in the African diaspora. As Tillis notes, “los espíritus de los orishas, de los muertos y de los héroes caídos obran recíprocamente dentro de la novela como parte de un presente continuo. Su dominio es un espacio donde convergen el presente, el pasado, y el futuro” (“un volver” 112). The spectrum of gods that form part of the Yoruba religion – Elegba, Oba, Ochú, Yemayá, and Changó, to name only a few – guide the *muntu* and navigate, in the case of the third chapter, the colonial and postcolonial story of Haiti. Changó, son of Yemayá and Orungán, exhibits the strongest hold over the narrative and his presence serves to unite the historical figures due to the fact he foresaw each of their roles. Bouckman professes Haiti’s future on page 154: “The White Wolf will murder his mulatto children. And the rebellious slaves, after killing all the masters, will proclaim themselves owners of the land. I see black emperors and kings, mulatto presidents, and again, the White Wolf...”

The historical figures linked to the slave rebellion in Haiti and the creation of the first black republic do not form part of a simultaneous, shared history, nor are their actions related to the historical event offered to the reader in chronological order. Instead the African cosmology that stretches across the entire novel provides an overarching framework that responds to the spiritual reality of the African diaspora.

If Zapata Olivella's masterpiece earns him the title of a "pensador universal" (Mina Aragón 26), it is a classification merited via the universal, global scope of *Changó*. The positioning of the African cosmic vision as the axis of the text (of which the most central point is the Yoruba force, Changó) allows for the creation of a counter-discourse on the African diaspora. Tillis confirms that through this structure Zapata Olivella "crea un contradiscurso con respect a la historia 'oficial' de Haití como la primera nación-estado negra en el hemisferio occidental y sitúa la revolución como el modelo para la lucha negra global" ("un volver" 107). The novel charts a global scope of the African diaspora with a metaphorical reach to similar issues that have impacted a universal black history as "the issues pertaining to the abolition of slavery and the creation of the Haitian nation impact those same movements in Latin America in general and Colombia and Venezuela, Brazil, and Mexico, in particular" (Luis, "Introduction" xxv).

While the overarching presence of Afro-cosmic mythology in *Changó*, upheld by the narrative guidance and pulse of the Orishas (namely Changó himself), based on Bantu culture, succeeds in defying western logic and unifying the five sequential sections of Zapata Olivella's four-century-spanning masterpiece, it is also the reality of suffering and oppression that functions as an important conjugation for the people of African descent in the Western hemisphere. For Zapata Olivella, a keen literary interest in oppressed or

downtrodden populations did not begin or end with *Changó*. In his autobiography titled *Levántate mulato* (1990) the author carves a space by denoting a specific “racial category” for those exploited by societal, cultural, religious, and other pressures: “...¿híbrido o nuevo hombre? ¿Soy realmente un traidor a mi raza?...o sencillamente un mestizo americano que busca defender la identidad de sus sangres oprimidas” (21). In a sense, Zapata Olivella’s defense of oppressed populations, with no allusion to race in the aforementioned quote, can be interpreted as the author’s life goal or purpose. In regards to *Changó*, Captain-Hidalgo remarks:

Oppression is so key a factor in Shango that its demise can be said to form the only true plot of the novel. Indeed, his entire trajectory is about a people’s quest for freedom – a liberation from whatever the current form of oppression happens to be. (115)

Critics such as Marvin Lewis further confirm oppression of the Afro-Americans as the main theme of the work, suggesting that the theme is not static and instead is best understood as a process – with a sustained focus on the *transition* from oppression to liberation (143). Lewis’ conclusion that liberation is reached in *Changó* for the African diaspora is problematized at the novel’s end when Elegba, accompanied by an infuriated Changó, accuses the deceased for not doing enough to liberate the oppressed: “Centuries have passed since Changó condemned the Muntu to suffer the yoke of foreigners in strange lands, and yet your fists have not fulfilled his commandment to make yourselves free!” (446).

If there is an oppressed population – read in *Changó* as multigenerational, multiracial, multicultural oppressed populations (plural) – there is also an *oppressor*. In *Changó* the oppressive force is none other than the “white wolf,” or “la loba blanca,” a metaphorical figure that pervades each of the five chapters. The mere fact the white wolf

has no voice within the narrative is indicative of Zapata Olivella's repositioning of history from a non-Eurocentric perspective. The Colombian author's treatment of the Haitian Revolution replaces the dominant colonial historical depiction of the event by approaching this rebellion of black slaves as the motivation(s) of the enslaved to abolish slavery and the chains of oppression. Tillis reiterates Zapata Olivella's "othering" of the historical event: "Su vista de la revolución haitiana destituye la interpretación colonial condicionada. Zapata Olivella posiciona de nuevo la revolución haitiana presentándola como el deseo de una gente esclavizada y oprimida para liberarse y resistir la opresión hegemónica" ("un volver" 113).

While the repetition of oppression and rebellion as a theme or trope in *Changó* is evidenced by myriad passages in the text and supported by innumerable critics who study Zapata Olivella's literary craft, it is the pervasion of the "real marvelous" (Carpentier's *lo real maravilloso*) in the work that functions as the necessary "additive" to the theme of oppression. In other words, in the third chapter alone, the presence of a talking horse – Toussaint's famed horse Boukman – is the most obvious representation of *lo real maravilloso*. While supernatural powers infuse earlier works of Zapata Olivella, such as *Chambacú* in which the protagonist Bonifacio is bestowed powers of black magic by the devil himself, *Changó* consecrates the belief system of Afro communities in supernatural powers, which provides a link to their ancestors and a tool with which the oppressed are able to combat the colonial repressive structure. While the presence of talking animals in *Changó* aligns with Carpentier's delineation of *lo real maravilloso*, literary critics such as Tillis have also referred to the pervasion and repetition of magical realism in Zapata Olivella's literary corpus. Tillis states: "...underneath the surface of social protest,

revolution, and violence lies a system of beliefs rooted in the culturally based rites, rituals, and superstitions of the natives” (*Darkening* 67). This belief system, classified by Captain-Hidalgo as Zapata Olivella’s distinctive “treatment of belief” in an attempt to broadly classify the prevalence of “certain typed of beliefs” in the author’s literary corpus, creates a literary space in which those of “sangre oprimida,” to reference Zapata Olivella’s autobiography, are given voice and ownership of their own stories and history.

Curbing an “addiction:” Mario Vargas Llosa’s Dominican Republic

Mario Vargas Llosa, recipient of the Nobel Prize in literature in 2010, commands an overwhelming commercial and global literary success. What attracted such an author, already at the height of his literary career when publishing *La fiesta del Chivo* in 2000, to the history of Haiti and Hispaniola? Did he, as did Carpentier and Zapata Olivella, see something in Haiti and Hispaniola’s history similar to that of his own *patria*, in this way proposing commonalities not just with the Caribbean, but with Latin America at large? In the case of Vargas Llosa and *La fiesta del chivo*, the historical context of the novel focuses not on the Haitian Revolution, but instead attends to the Trujillo dictatorship in the Dominican Republic and the stories that unfold during this period. Regardless of the different historical focus than the two novels analyzed earlier, the novel’s importance in the recreation of the history of Hispaniola is paramount, and the history of the Dominican Republic cannot be told in full without intertwining the history of its “tragic twin,” Haiti. There are, indeed, mentions of and allusions to Haiti within the novel, mainly in conjunction with Trujillo’s treatment of race – especially as the novel reveals Trujillo’s Haitian ancestry that the dictator sought zealously to conceal. The novel is best

categorized as a narration of the *trujillato*, a literary phenomenon describing works that center around themes surrounding the thirty-one year dictatorship of Trujillo. Although many Dominican authors elect to narratively re-create the *trujillato*, the fact that non-Dominican authors such as Vargas Llosa have done the same is perhaps more noteworthy. Along with Vargas Llosa, other notable literary recreations of the Trujillo regime include Dominican American Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* and Spaniard Manuel Vázquez Montalbán's *Galíndez*, novels that "pretenden llevar a cabo una construcción que conlleva una parcial re-escritura de la historia, respondiendo a unos intereses concretos, empíricamente verificables y por lo tanto desconstruibles" (Gallego Cuiñas 211).

The publication of *La fiesta del chivo* is evidence of the unparalleled history of Hispaniola and its ability to catch the attention of a Nobel Prize-winning author. Vargas Llosa, enthralled by the secrets of the Trujillo era, succeeds in re-visiting the story of an otherwise silenced victim of the atrocities of the Trujillo regime, a young woman named Urania Cabral who is sexually violated by the dictator himself. He weaves Urania's narrative alongside the contested history of Trujillo's assassination in 1961. As Vargas Llosa clarifies in the prologue to *La fiesta del chivo*, the horror surrounding the historical trauma of Urania Cabral and Trujillo – "The Goat" himself – proved to be an "addicting" one, a story that had to be told. It is a "story," furthermore, that functions as a mirror of sorts for other Latin American countries also battling and confronting histories defined and afflicted by brutal dictatorships. As Enrique López-Calvo confirms: "The study of Trujillo's totalitarianism unveils the tactics used by most Latin American dictators" (43). It is possible Trujillo's impact on the Dominican Republic, as well as the ideological

aftermath of his thirty-one year reign, reminded Vargas Llosa of his native Peru. The political context in Peru during the time of the novel's writing likely provided the author with a backdrop on which to reflect on the blatant immorality and depravity of then-President Alberto Fujimori, who resigned in 2000 before his term ended due to claims of his corruption, and whose presidency was linked to drug trafficking and numerous human rights abuses.

La fiesta del chivo signals Vargas Llosa's second fictional portrayal of a foreign Latin American government, his interest in Brazilian history and politics reflected in his earlier novel *La guerra del fin del mundo* (1981). Both *La guerra del fin del mundo* and *La fiesta del chivo* merit the generic categorizations of both the aforementioned New Historical Novel and the "caudillo novel." The social-criticism in the narrative, with strong political character, often aligns with the historical novel genre and many scholars compare these texts with Menton's explicitly defined "New Historical Novel."⁴⁷ What is interesting about *La fiesta del chivo* in particular is its elevated status as "el acontecimiento sociológico literario más importante ocurrido en el país desde la muerte de Trujillo" (Gallego Cuiñas 217). Much of the work's critical importance and general public acceptance stems from the fact the novel is rooted in historical documents. Sabine Kollmann reminds readers that "Vargas Llosa ha investigado en un minucioso trabajo de documentación, con entrevistas a una gran cantidad de testigos. Relata con fidelidad los acontecimientos, pero se permite grandes libertades en el tratamiento de los personajes históricos" (137). In reference to the "la novela de dictador" or "caudillo novel" identification, it is important to note that although Vargas Llosa is an author whose name

⁴⁷ In concordance with Menton's definition of the New Historical Novel, Vargas Llosa uses techniques in *La fiesta del chivo* such as interior monologue, parody, and flashback.

appears among those of the Latin American literary Boom of the 1960s and 1970s, his *caudillo* narrative did not surface until approximately thirty years after three seminal “caudillo novels” were written by Boom authors in 1974 and 1975: *Yo el supremo* by Augusto Roa Bastos (1974), *El recurso del método* (1974) by Alejo Carpentier, and *El otoño del patriarca* (1975) by Gabriel García Márquez. Not only did Vargas Llosa wait nearly thirty years to write his own internationally-received *caudillo* text, but he elected to do so from multiple perspectives, not simply narrating the novel only from the tyrant’s point of view as Roa Bastos, García Márquez, and Carpentier did.

Vargas Llosa presents his take on the *trujillato* in *La fiesta del chivo* through three interconnected, complementary narratives: the first narrates the history of the daughter of a former Trujillo administration official, Urania Cabral; another narrates Trujillo’s final day before his assassination (in the dictator’s voice); and the third follows the trajectory of the four Dominican men who killed Trujillo in 1961. Junot Díaz, in the first pages of *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* makes explicit reference to Vargas Llosa’s interpretation of the Trujillo Era: “The rap about The Girl Trujillo Wanted is a pretty common one on the Island. As common as krill... So common that Mario Vargas Llosa didn’t have to do much except open his mouth to sift it out of the air” (244). Díaz’s comment, however, is far from the truth. Regardless of the pervasiveness of the *trujillato*, to say the Peruvian author “didn’t do much” is a mistake, as Vargas Llosa meticulously studied both the regime and its protagonist. While the author may have, at least in part, relied on the fact that “Rafael Trujillo’s psychology and unscrupulous political tactics” can be understood “as a synecdoche for most Latin American dictators and their regimes” (López-Calvo 43), he also dedicated three years to studying the history of the Dominican

Republic and the impact Trujillo had on the Dominican nation. Raymond L. Williams in *Vargas Llosa: Otra historia de un deicidio* asserts:

Vargas Llosa dedicó unos tres años y medio al trabajo de la novela, haciendo en el proceso larga investigación histórica en la República Dominicana, visitando la isla para investigar archivos, consultar libros y entrevistar a dominicanos que habían vivido la dictadura de Trujillo. Incluso entabló conversaciones con algunos de los colaboradores más íntimos del dictador; tuvo tres entrevistas con Joaquín Balaguer. (270)

This intimate, involved study of the Trujillo regime extended beyond a formal investigation, including the aforementioned historical consults and interviews, to an understanding of popular mythology surrounding the dictatorial figure in the Dominican Republic.⁴⁸ It is a result of this more culturally embedded investigative work that Vargas Llosa, according to Williams, succeeded in developing within his narrative “la mitología popular creada alrededor del Trujillo histórico de carne y hueso” (271).

Vargas Llosa’s dedication to studying the history of the Dominican Republic and the impact Trujillo had on the Dominican nation, a steadfastness confirmed in the previous paragraph, can also be interpreted from another angle or perspective: Haiti. If it is true Trujillo had an impact on the Dominican nation, it is also true that Haiti had an impact on the Dominican nation *and* on Trujillo seeing as Dominican history, society, and culture to a large extent is grounded by Haitian history, society, and culture. There are numerous examples throughout Hispaniola’s history serving to highlight the driving force Haitian events possess in the Dominican Republic. The two aforementioned Haitian Occupations of neighboring Santo Domingo, at the turn of the nineteenth century (1800-

⁴⁸ Vargas Llosa commented in an interview with respect to the empirical research in connection with the novel: “No inventé nada que no hubiera podido ocurrir” (Williams 270).

02) and later from 1822-44, are prime examples. As a result of the sustained Haitian ambition to possess and control the eastern half of the Island, Dominicans traditionally define themselves in contrast to Haitians. In reference to the 1822-44 Haitian Occupation, Eugenio Matibag professes: “The collective memory of the 22-year occupation serves as a historical referent and landmark by which the Dominican national identity sets itself off, politically and psychologically, against the image of the Haitian Other” (101). It is true that Trujillo was trained by the US Marines during the first US military intervention in the Dominican Republic, but I propose that the infamous dictator was also trained, in a metaphorical sense, by events on the other side of Hispaniola. Or rather, Haiti’s history as related to the Dominican Republic shaped Trujillo’s own policies and contributed greatly to his racist, anti-Haitian ideology.

The human face Vargas Llosa attributes to the dictator by including the “benefactor’s” own voice (obsessed with obtaining both a political and sexual power) is one of the most widely critiqued, and unique, aspects of the novel, but there are two other narrative perspectives shared with Trujillo’s. These other voices include Urania Cabral (“Uranita”) and the *Jefe’s* assassins. The shifting narrative voice offers a more profound, nuanced vision of the controversial Trujillo. Williams confirms that through this interlacing of voices in *La fiesta del chivo* “el lector observa la experiencia de la dictadura, su ocaso y lo que acontece posteriormente” (268). While the novel centers around the dictator himself, the true protagonist of the work and the voice at both the opening and ending of the novel is Urania’s. The daughter of Agustín Cabral, one of the many “right-hands” of Trujillo, controls the pulse of the narrative in her search for answers to not only her past and her relationship with her father, but also to the collective

history of her native Dominican Republic. She is invested personally in the *trujillato*, a victim of the dictator's sexual conquests. The inclusion of Urania, a female narrator, serves as a stark contrast to Julia Alvarez's Mirabal sisters historicized in *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994):

Despite being an independent woman, the protagonist is trapped in her own mental torment. She tries to endure her rage against her father by studying and working obsessively. In contrast with the female protagonists of Julia Álvarez's "In the Time of the Butterflies", she fails to subvert the paradigm created by previous novels, as she never truly becomes an agent of her own liberation and, therefore, a model for other women. (López-Calvo 38)

While Urania is a graduate of Harvard and a successful lawyer who has made a life for herself in the United States – the dream of many Dominicans on the Island – she is also a fugitive of her native country and her past. Urania is a broken woman who confronts a quasi mid-life crisis when she decides to return to Santo Domingo and confront her own legacy, putting back together the broken pieces. Through Urania's narration one of the dictator's most commonly portrayed characteristics is addressed: his role as authoritative father of a Dominican nation manipulated and misconfigured by his behavior as a sexually abusive "father" figure, committing metaphorical incest by seducing both wives and children (like Urania) of his loyal followers, along with countless other young women.

The third and final narrative voice in *La fiesta del chivo* belongs to the four Dominican men attributed with Trujillo's assassination: Antonio Imbert Barrera, Antonio de la Maza, Salvador Estrella Sadhalá ("El Turco"), and Amado García Guerrero. The interwoven stories of these men showcases how Dominicans who at first identified as loyal civil servants of Trujillo – "friends" and outward supporters of the dictatorship – converted into anti-*trujillistas*. Each of the four assassins confronts his own reasons for

involvement in plotting to kill the dictator. Amado Guerrero, for example, (also known as “Amadito), was a member of Trujillo’s armed forces. A loyal follower of the regime, Trujillo tested Amadito’s loyalty when he asked him to leave his girlfriend because her family denounced the regime, including killing her brother as an act of respect and loyalty to Trujillo. Plagued by his involvement in the murder, Amadito reaches a high point of disillusionment with the *trujillato*. The other three men have similar backgrounds, rooted in a disenchantment or disagreement with the regime (distaste echoed by many seemingly irrelevant or secondary characters in the novel).

Carpentier’s and Zapata Olivella’s narrative alterations of the Haitian Revolution concern themes surrounding oppression and rebellion. Reflecting on *Changó*, Captain-Hidalgo elevates the centrality of an oppressive thematic in the work: “Oppression is so key a factor in *Shango* that its demise can be said to form the only true plot of the novel. Indeed, his entire trajectory is about a people’s quest for freedom – a liberation from whatever the current form of oppression happens to be” (115). The expression or representation of oppression in *La fiesta del chivo*, however, moves from the repressed population of black slaves on the French colony of Saint Domingue to the Dominican nation suffering at the hands of the violent tyrant, Trujillo. To signal yet another difference, aside from that of the historical context of the narrative (although all three novels are set geographically on the island of Hispaniola), both *El reino* and *Changó* give voice to the downtrodden themselves, whether told entirely from the perspective of the Afro-descendants in the Americas (*Changó*) or positioning a black slave as protagonist (Ti Noel in *El reino*). Contrastingly, *La fiesta del chivo* lends voice to the oppressor (alongside that of the oppressed).

“What Vargas Llosa exhumes and refashions in *The Feast of the Goat* is basically, often factually, true. And yet it is never enough; there’s always more” (López-Calvo xi). The perspective of the dictator himself, controlling the narrative of various chapters, can be interpreted as this “something more.” The Trujillo depicted in *La fiesta del chivo* is a vulnerable one, exposed and susceptible to failure – he himself is the prey, no longer preying on others as the all-*poderoso* benefactor of the Dominican nation:

Despertó, paralizado por una sensación de catástrofe. Inmóvil, pestañeaba en la oscuridad, prisionero en una telaraña, a punto de ser devorado por un bicho peludo lleno de ojos. Por fin pudo estirar la mano hacia el velador donde guardaba el revólver y la metralleta con el cargador puesto. Pero, en vez del arma, empuñó el reloj despertados: las cuatro menos diez. (Vargas Llosa, *La fiesta* 25)

This is how Chapter Two begins, the first narrated by the *Chivo* himself. Instead of beginning the narration *en media res* or with a simple recreation of the dictator’s surroundings or conversations, the chapter begins immersed in the dictator’s private dream, distanced from reality. Trujillo imagines himself caught in a web, about to be devoured, and the reader senses his terror. Instead of a portrayal of Trujillo in a stable, powerful state, he is experiencing “una sensación de catástrofe.” This vision of the dictator from the outside looking in enables an internal, unguarded approach to the infamous figure; here Trujillo is *persona* and not merely *personaje*. Regardless of Vargas Llosa’s construction of a human(e) Trujillo, in the end the social and cultural circumstances of 1960s Dominican Republic trump the weakening dictator, and with his assassination “Vargas Llosa separates himself from a personal identification with the dictator that could inspire nostalgia or empathy for the character. At the same time, he avoids being accused of promoting dictatorial regimes” (López-Calvo 57). In *La fiesta del chivo* Trujillo not only meets his destiny and is killed, he also deteriorates physically

and sexually, losing grasp of his military prowess just the same. Categorized as a disciplinarian, a true “maniático de la puntualidad” (Vargas Llosa, *La fiesta* 24), for Vargas Llosa Trujillo emerges as a nefarious leader whose rule results in “la represión, la violación y la muerte de innumerables personajes-ciudadanos de la isla” (Williams 273). The narrative perspective of the oppressor himself, then, leads back to the oppressed, justifying their actions against the regime.

Multiple “Hispaniola(s)”

After addressing a pan-Latin American view of Hispaniola and Haiti by looking at three foundational novels, written within a fifty-one year time frame from 1949-2000, I have found that what unites all three visions is a common interest in the history of the Island. While different forces drive Carpentier, Zapata Olivella, and Vargas Llosa to Hispaniola’s history, their “external” portrayals of Haiti and the Dominican Republic allow for a more careful comparison and approximation of Haiti as seen through the more insular-lens of its Dominican neighbors in the chapters to follow. The election of Carpentier, Zapata Olivella, and Vargas Llosa to transcend national borders and their own national “traumas” to write about a small Caribbean country or isle is worthy of a book-length project itself, but it is also important to mention they are not the only Latin American authors to do so.

Another notable work centered on Haitian history and the slave rebellion is Chilean Isabel Allende’s *La isla bajo el mar* (2009). While this work could be analyzed alongside *El reino*, *Changó*, and *La fiesta*, its fixation on the life of the *mulata* slave narrator, Zarité or Tété, shifts the novel’s focus away from the history of Hispaniola,

instead highlighting the interconnected lives of Tété and her previous master, Toulouse Valmorain. *La isla bajo el mar* intertwines the histories of Haiti and New Orleans, following the move of a Saint Domingue plantation family to Louisiana. At the turn of the eighteenth century, both the island of Hispaniola in the tropics and New Orleans on the Gulf of Mexico were in a state of chaos. In the novel, the slaves of the plantation master, Valmorain, join forces in the slave revolt that leads to eventual emancipation and the creation of the first black republic. In the turmoil that follows, Valmorain and his family travel to New Orleans, shortly before the Louisiana Purchase. The numerous subplots throughout the novel provide a representation of not only the Haitian Revolution and its aftermath but also the abolitionist movement and the Lewis and Clark expedition. Apparent from the various subplots and inclusion of countless minor characters, Allende cannot focus on just one element of Haitian culture or history, instead opting to highlight numerous historical events, including the experiences of the Saint Domingue refugees after the founding of independent Haiti in geographic spaces other than Hispaniola. Symptomatic of Allende's apparent overstimulation by Haiti's rich history, the novel delves deeply into Haitian culture and social practices with a keen interest in portraying the day-to-day life of enslaved blacks on the Island. The novel is told from the perspective of an orphaned mulatta slave, Zarite, and signals the importance of vodou, often describing religious practices and Haitian spirituality. Similar to the authors considered earlier in this chapter, the author's turn to the historical novel in *Isla bajo el mar* is an echo of Allende's previous works, namely *Hija de la Fortuna* (1999) and *El Zorro: Comienza la leyenda* (2005).⁴⁹

⁴⁹ *Hija de la fortuna* fictionalizes Chilean history from independence up to Pinochet's

It seems unfathomable that in the mid 1900s Haitian scholar and intellectual Jean Price-Mars felt the need to convince his fellow Haitian writers that Haiti's stories were worth telling (Danticat, *Haiti Noir* 13), seeing as both Caribbean and Pan Latin American writers throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries had found literary inspiration in Haiti and Hispaniola's history and folklore. The stories and history once silenced, as was the Haitian Revolution by European and American Enlightenment figures for whom the idea of the black revolution "challenged the ontological and political assumptions" of the time (Trouillot 81-82), found a strong voice in literary representations, including those of Carpentier, Zapata Olivella, and Vargas Llosa. *El reino de este mundo*, *Changó*, and *La fiesta del chivo*, enabling one to draw conclusions about the differences between a Caribbean writer's representation of Haiti/Hispaniola and that of a Pan-Latin American writer. A primary difference between the two appears to be related to each author's personal, spatial proximity to the country of Haiti and/or the island of Hispaniola and its people. The only Caribbean writer of the three, Carpentier, visited the island of Hispaniola and its many historical monuments. He also maintained constant contact with Haitians who had migrated to his native Cuba. Vargas Llosa and Zapata Olivella, on the other hand, do not evince such close personal or geographic ties to Haiti and Hispaniola. Drawn to the island's history and lured by the idea of a "good story," the two approached the writing of *La fiesta del Chivo* and *Changó* more as temporary projects, not life-long obsessions and historical/cultural fixations. Regardless of their interest in the history of Haiti and Hispaniola, neither Zapata Olivella nor Vargas Llosa has written a second text with a focus on the same geographic space or historical scope. Carpentier, though,

military dictatorship and *El Zorro* follows the original history of the Spanish figure, Zorro.

published many articles and short stories on Haitian themes.⁵⁰ However, all three authors – regardless of their identification as “Caribbean” or “Latin American” – saw something tangible and relatable in the history of Haiti and Hispaniola. Their texts help to establish a coherent, interwoven perspective of the unique insular space and its history that is relevant not only to the Caribbean and for Caribbean writers, but to Latin America at-large. In all three novels the authors’ decision to represent Haiti/Hispaniola leads to the erasure of the “rayas divisoras” that often cast the Haitians as the black Other or “amenaza negra” and marginalize Haiti and Hispaniola.

⁵⁰ These include “Panorama del arte haitiano,” “Nueves luces sobre el vodú,” and “Miremos hacia Haiti.”

CHAPTER 2

DOUBLE TAKES: WRITING HAITI DURING THE *TRUJILLATO* (1930-61)

The *trujillato* and Trujillo's "Revaluation and Reconstruction" of the Dominican Republic

The anti-Haitian sentiment prevalent in the Dominican Republic during the first-half of the twentieth century is undeniably linked to the thirty-one year dictatorship of Rafael Leónidas Trujillo. Trujillo's conversion of the island-nation into his puppet, into which he engrained his desire for racial purity and emphasis on Hispanism or *hispanicismo*,⁵¹ met no limits. The oppressive social and cultural atmosphere during the *trujillato* was not manipulated solely by the bloodstained hands of the tyrant himself, but instead backed by his intellectual army, or "los trujillistas teóricos," as I will refer to the group in the following pages.⁵² Prior to examining more closely Trujillo's intellectual elites – largely responsible for the roots of Dominican prejudice against Haitians – this chapter takes a closer look at the Trujillo era and the increasing stronghold of anti-Haitian ideology in the early twentieth century. Following this close look at scholarly culture during Trujillo's reign is an analysis of the works of two twentieth-century Dominican authors: Ramón Marrero Aristy and Freddy Prestol Castillo. Both Marrero Aristy and

⁵¹ As noted in the Introduction, for more on the differences between *hispanicismo* and *antihatianismo* (as well as differences between *dominicanidad* and *antihatianismo*), see Mayes.

⁵² The term "trujillistas teóricos" was first used by Andrés L. Mateo to describe the group of intellectuals allowing their hand to be dictated by Trujillo. As Néstor E. Rodríguez confirms, with the definition of this term "Mateo allude a aquellos intelectuales que por su ubicación positiva dentro de la maquinaria estatal ejercían un poder epistémico concreto: el de artificar y transmitir punto por punto la trayectoria ideológica del régimen trujillista" (*La isla 2*).

Prestol Castillo published texts from 1930-61 with blatant anti-Haitian sentiment: *La República Dominicana: origen y destino del pueblo cristiano más antiguo de América* (1957-58) and *Paisajes y meditaciones de una frontera* (1943). These attempts to historicize the *trujillato*, veering from novelistic forms of interpreting the era, mirror the dominant, hegemonic discourse of the period. However, when these works are read carefully, a deeper understanding emerges. Such a reading, encompassing an alternate representation of Haitians, is strengthened when considered alongside the same authors' more controversial and better-known works: Marrero Aristy's *Over* (1939) and Prestol Castillo's *El masacre se pasa a pie* (1973). Reading these two canonical, widely-disseminated works of Marrero Aristy and Prestol Castillo against lesser known, less "risky" texts that are markedly more in line with Trujillo ideology of the era, highlights the varied representation of Haitians in literature during the early to mid-nineteenth century and allows for a closer reading of subtle textual markers that subvert the dominant anti-Haitian discourse of the time.

The acceptance of anti-Haitianism as state ideology in the Dominican Republic was not spontaneous, and the underpinnings of the race-based doctrine can be traced as far back as colonial times. These early origins are tied to racial prejudices of Spanish colonizers in the New World's first official colony, Santo Domingo. Santo Domingo represents the true epicenter of colonial power during the fifteenth century; it is the land that marked Christopher Columbus's claim to fame, the site of the first *mestizos* (offspring of Spanish and Taíno Indians), and later the first European colony to import African slaves for the cultivation of sugarcane. While Santo Domingo was an early front-runner of colonial growth and success, the French colony Saint-Domingue, representing

the western third of the Island, boasted a rapidly growing economy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Comparing themselves to the successful French colony only a stone's throw and a river away, those on the eastern side of the Island strived to differentiate themselves from their neighbors. Within this competitive intra-island environment, Dominican nationalism first materialized. According to Ernesto Sagás:

In the elites' view, the inhabitants of Santo Domingo considered themselves as Catholic, loyal Spanish subjects fighting against the encroachment of the French, Spain's European enemy. Furthermore, all the inhabitants of the western part of Hispaniola – including blacks and mulattos – were considered “French” by the people of Santo Domingo. These ideas led to the development of a dual prejudice against the people of the west: a national-cultural prejudice against French culture and civilization (which were considered alien and different), topped by a racial prejudice against the non-European population of the west (which was considered twice as inferior – culturally and racially). (24-25)

While Dominicans have historically sought to define themselves as non-Haitian, with Haiti holding an important role in the configuration of the Dominican self, Haitians do not commonly describe themselves in relation to the Dominican subject. Haitians do, however, exhibit prejudiced views of their Dominican neighbors with negative stereotypes. David Howard reminds his readers, in his analysis of race and ethnicity in the Dominican Republic, “racism flows both ways.” Howard continues, stating for Haitians, “Dominican women are typically depicted as prostitutes, owing to the relatively large number of Dominican-managed brothels and beauty salons in Port-au-Prince” (19).

One should keep the colonial era in mind when considering the beginnings of what is today regarded as anti-Haitian ideology, but there are various other significant events that permanently rendered the relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti including, but not limited to, the Haitian Revolution, the Haitian Occupation of

Santo Domingo (1822-44), and the United States Occupation of the Dominican Republic (1916-30).⁵³ It is not until the twentieth century, however, that the very peak of anti-Haitian sentiment is reached in Dominican society and culture as a result of the over three-decade long reign of Trujillo. This overbearing influence of the *trujillato* as related to state ideology is evidenced by the fact Sagas' study *Race and Politics in the Dominican Republic* (2000) separates its tracing of *antihaitianismo* into two chapters – the first titled “Antihaitianismo” covering colonialism to the twentieth century, with the second dedicated solely to examining *antihaitianismo* during the Trujillo era. Kimberly E. Simmons arrives at a similar conclusion, stating: “Dominicanness was firmly cemented during the *trujillato*” (21).

⁵³ See Frank Moya Pons' publication *La dominación haitiana, 1822-1844* (2013) for more on these events. In this work Moya Pons begins by tracing the rise of Jean Pierre Boyer and expanding on his invasion of the Dominican capital, Santo Domingo, beginning in 1820. It is in 1822 that the union of the two territories of Hispaniola commenced. Moya Pons outlines the significant first political decisions of Boyer: “La primera decisión de Boyer, una vez que tomó posesión de la parte oriental de la isla de Santo Domingo, fue decretar la abolición de la esclavitud y prometer tierras a todos los libertos” (35). The substantial changes the twenty-two year occupation brought to Santo Domingo drastically altered Dominican thought, and more changes followed. When the Dominican Republic became an independent nation in 1844 a turbulent independent government began, leading to a Revolution in July of 1857 that ended with Pedro Santana in power. In 1860 Santana requested the annexation of the Dominican Republic to Spain and the Dominican nation once again became a Spanish colony. The Restoration War refers to a period of revolt as Dominicans responded to the economic and social crisis that engulfed the territory as Spain re-installed slavery and race-based politics in addition to religious intolerance. On March 3, 1865 Spain issued a Royal Decree nulling the annexation of the Dominican territory. Bosch's historical study “La Guerra de Restauración” (1982) marks the importance of this period lamenting the reality “la casi totalidad de los dominicanos no tienen idea de lo que fue esa guerra esfuerzo colectivo, gigantesco y heroico” (7). An interest in such historical moments, like the annexation of the Dominican Republic to Spain, and later, the annulment of this annexation, points to the identity crisis – that continues today – of the Dominican people and such works interested in the past point to the important relationship between literature, history, and politics. In the late-nineteenth century the Dominican nation went from colony to independent nation, endured twenty years of Haitian rule, and returned to colonization once more.

Addressing Trujillo's relationship with anti-Haitian sentiment in the Dominican Republic proves incomplete without considering the dictator's own heritage and background. Widely known, but supposedly erased from Trujillo's own memory of his family tree, is the fact his maternal grandmother was Haitian. This familial "stain" served as impetus for the tyrant's obsession with race and his constant desire to cover up – in both a literal and figurative sense (with cosmetic powders and commissioned biographies stating his descent from a French *marquis* and Spanish officer (Howard 9)) – his racial and ethnic background, ultimately leading to events such as the 1937 Massacre. Wucker clarifies: "The general, so proud of his looks, with every hair in place, was denying the one aspect of his appearance he could not change: a skin color darker than what he believed would have won him acceptance among the upper classes of Dominican society" (51). Trujillo's false claims to a white, non-*negro*, and non-*mulato* lineage greatly influenced his rendering of Haiti into the Other and largely helped to foment a Dominican nationalism that excluded Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent. As Alan Cambeira confirms, "Although Trujillo was admittedly one of the nation's wealthiest individuals, he nevertheless possessed neither the prerequisite family genealogy nor the racial stock nor the moral character that traditionally typified the composition of this exclusive sector of Dominican society" (183).

Pre-Trujillo era historical processes heavily influenced the relations between the two colonies of Hispaniola. These moments set the stage for the conflicts between Haiti and the Dominican Republic on which the dictator focused and found an initial base on which to pronounce Haitians as explicitly non-Dominican. The most significant difference, perhaps, relates to the number of African slaves exported to the French

territory of Saint Domingue to support the burgeoning plantation economy of the eighteenth century. In 1739, for example, there were 117,00 slaves in Saint Domingue, while less than a century later, in 1791, (the year of the uprising that led to the creation of the first black republic), there were 480,000 (Fennema and Loewenthal 17). The large number of African slaves brought to Saint Domingue in the late seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century by French colonists to sustain the plantation economy and the production of sugar, coffee, and cotton led to the establishment of Haiti and Haitian as synonymous with backwardness, uncleanness, and poverty. Furthermore, the reverberations of the monumental event at the end of the eighteenth century – the Haitian Revolution (which began with the first slave rebellions in 1791 and ended with Haitian independence in 1804) – were felt just as strongly on the Dominican side of the island and contributed immensely to the Dominican portrayal of the Haitian subject. The Haitian Occupation of the Dominican Republic in the years following the Revolution (1822-44) also played a role in widening the gap between Dominicans and Haitians. The Occupation, although initially supported by many Dominican nationals, positioned Haiti as the perennial enemy of the Dominican Republic, and the Dominican nation came to see the neighboring country as a constant threat, eager to control the eastern side of the Island. Based largely upon the racial realities of the early plantation economy and the aftermath of events such as the Haitian Revolution and Haitian Occupation, the Dominican national identity came to be associated with a three-tiered “perfecta” defined by whiteness, Catholicism, and Hispanic heritage (Moya Pons, *El pasado dominicano* 238). This three-part harmony was one further championed by Trujillo, painting Dominicans as proud, modest *campesinos* of Taíno and European descent, and Haitians

as superstitious, backward Africans. Trujillo ideology went to great lengths to emphasize the underpinnings of the Dominican nation as white, Hispanic, and Catholic, a dominant conception that led to a “re-evaluation and reconstitution of the Dominican nation” (Howard 31). In many circles, this racial and ethnic understanding of Dominican society still prevails today.

The pervasive quality of anti-black Haitian sentiment in the Dominican Republic, bolstered during the *trujillato*, permeates the literature published during the time and sanctioned by the Trujillo regime; and yet an alternative view of Haitians – or allusions of such – mark both *El masacre se pasa a pie* and *Over*. While both Prestol Castillo and Marrero Aristy wrote most productively during the 1930-61 period and were influenced by the cultural politics created by the political atmosphere of the time, their texts can also be read as a product of other historical moments at the start of the twentieth century. All of the works examined in this chapter can be read in relation to the sugar industry and, more specifically, the surge of Haitian migrants to the Dominican Republic at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Howard confirms, “Following the sharp fall in sugar prices during the 1920s, the *cocolo/a* labor force on the sugar plantations came to be replaced by migrant Haitian laborers, who worked for much lower wage rates” (25). While the term *cocolo* in the Dominican Republic typically refers to plantation workers from Caribbean islands *other than* neighboring Haiti, the transition from a largely *cocolo* workforce to a Haitian one is key. The shift is reflective of the low price of sugar in the 1920s as a result of an excess supply and a rise in competition from European producers

of beet sugar.⁵⁴ Regardless, cane sugar remained the most important export for both Haiti and the Dominican Republic despite the shifts in the world market. The Haitian labor force is at the center of both texts analyzed in the following pages.

Marrero Aristy and Prestol Castillo: Just Two More “trujillistas teóricos?”

Before considering Marrero Aristy and Prestol Castillo’s connection to the Trujillo regime and its literary production, readers must understand the intellectuals preceding them. For such early intellectuals, the notion of *dominicanidad* was not synonymous with anti-black and/or anti-Haitian. Instead, these early racist interpretations present variations of the anti-Haitian discourse beginning as early as the eighteenth century with Antonio Sánchez-Valverde’s (1729-91) *Idea del valor de la Isla Española y utilidades que de ella puede sacar su monarquía* (1785). The Spanish author’s audience focused on Madrid authorities, with a goal to update them on the economic potential of the colony of Santo Domingo. Such a report, no doubt, compares the western colony to its eastern neighbor: Saint Domingue. For Sánchez-Valverde, the French colony’s economic project is a model for success and the author attributes the triumphs of Saint Domingue to “the *Negroes*, whose arms are the prime movers of so much productivity” (168). Sánchez-Valverde, however, represents the racial makeup of Santo Domingo – in opposition to neighboring Saint Domingue – as *non-Black*, instead electing to use the term “Indo-Hispanic.” This racial marker denotes mixture between the indigenous

⁵⁴ A result of the decline of the sugar estate in the 1920s due to plummeting sugar prices was labor disputes on numerous Dominican plantations. As Mayes confirms, “Sugar-workers organized strikes as early as 1919, demanding higher wages to offset inflation” (102).

population and the Spanish. San Miguel argues the majority of Dominican elites from the eighteenth century defined mixing as a racial synthesis between these two groups and “thus the true origin of mestizaje in Santo Domingo is concealed, and the demographically dominant black presence is ignored” (43).

Pedro Francisco Bonó (1828-1906) was a sociologist writing in the wake of the Haitian Occupation of the Dominican Republic that ended in 1844 and forced Dominican intellectuals to confront and construct a Dominican national identity. His view on the ethno-racial composition of the Dominican Republic opposes Sánchez-Villaverde’s. Bonó emphasized the imprint left by the Spanish conquest on Dominican society, firmly stressing the non-existence or extinction of the indigenous Taíno population. In Bonó’s work, due to his entrenchment in the period of Haitian Domination and Dominican independence that followed, the result of Jean-Pierre Boyer’s short-lived attempt to unite the Island was “a fundamental, indestructible antagonism between the two people” (*Papeles* 343-44; my translation). Bonó stressed the specific colonial experience in the Dominican Republic, as opposed to Haiti, as the root of racial difference and favored what San Miguel refers to as “mulatoism.” Under this ideology, “by distancing itself racially from its neighbor, Santo Domingo moves closer to Europe” (San Miguel 50). This turn away from Haiti and differentiation from all things French also highlights emphasis on a (mythical) Hispanism key to the Dominican national consciousness. While on the surface it appears that Bonó’s work betrays the underpinnings of anti-Haitian sentiment, he recognizes common interests between the two countries and does not view racial difference as an immutable impediment to Haitian-Dominican relations (San Miguel 50).

In the work of Miguel Peña-Batlle (1902-54) and Joaquín Balaguer (1906-2002) the anti-Haitian xenophobia promulgated by the Trujillo regime finds its center. Peña-Batlle attributes all failures of the Dominican state to neighboring Saint Domingue, and later Haiti. Namely, he identifies Haiti's Afro population as a persistent threat to the Spanish descendants who called the Dominican Republic home: "El haitiano que nos molesta y nos pone sobreaviso es el que forma la última expresión social de allende la frontera. Ese tipo es francamente indeseable" (67). For Peña-Batlle, Haiti engendered the antithesis to Spanish values, and it was the Trujillo regime that rendered possible a return to a Dominican nationality untainted by the events and repercussions of the Haitian Revolution and Haitian occupation of Santo Domingo.⁵⁵ Much like Peña-Batlle, Balaguer equates race with nation in his intent to distance Dominicans from Haitians, claiming the two groups belong to different nations *and* races, an ideology expressed in *La isla al revés: Haití y el destino dominicano* (1983).⁵⁶ Balaguer's argument is bolstered by the supposed fundamental whiteness of the Dominican people – a "whiteness" stained by the black presence stemming from Haiti. His four-part solution to the "border problem" – economic, moral, political, and racial – claims "la raza etiópica acabaría por absorber a la blanca" (97). Ságas notes, "Peña-Batlle defended Trujillo's actions from a historical perspective" and "Balaguer served as one of the regime's most efficient and outspoken apologists" (50). Although Peña Batlle and Balaguer fostered a tradition of anti-negro and anti-Haitian thought in the Dominican Republic that has lasted into the twentieth and

⁵⁵ Peña Batlle confirms in his 1946 book: "el pueblo dominicano encontró en Trujillo el cuerpo de su unidad" (197).

⁵⁶ Balaguer's work under this title represents a re-published version of a 1947 text, *La realidad dominicana: semblanza de un país y de un régimen*. The re-named text, published in 1983, is an edited version.

twenty-first centuries, there were many other intellectuals writing during the Trujillo era who did not subscribe whole-heartedly to the dominant anti-Haitian ideology, including Marrero Aristy and Prestol Castillo. The works of these two authors writing during the *trujillato* is a refutation to a regime encouraging ethnic conflict while at the same time attempting to control it. Their work rejects racial disaccord and advocates for a color-blind society as Jose Martí had done in his seminal essay “Nuestra América.” Just as the negrophobic nationalism of Peña Batlle and Balaguer manipulated racism to garner political power and oppress the nation’s lower classes, Marrero Aristy and Prestol Castillo maneuvered the dominant discourse regarding the Haitian subject and succeeded in writing and publishing texts with a conflicted, alternate representation of their eastern neighbors during and after the *trujillato*.

Not *Over* it! Reading Haiti in Ramón Marrero Aristy

Ramón Marrero Aristy’s (1914-59) widely-read Dominican novel, *Over* (1939), is the best example of a text written *and* published during the *trujillato* that provides an alternate to *antihaitianismo* ideology. The novel instead approaches the Haitian subject with sympathy, re-writing the relationship between Haitians and Dominicans in inherently hierarchical settings such as the plantation. *Over* has gained wide readership, and Torres-Saillant identifies the work as “easily the most frequently read and highly regarded Dominican fiction work from the first half of the century” (*Introduction* 19). In terms of the work’s alternative representation of Haitians, however, *Over* merits further analysis. While the most in-depth study of *Over* appears in Doris Sommer’s *One Master Over Another*, published in 1983, literary critics should not be “over,” or should not

neglect, Marrero Aristy's prize text. A fleeting reference to the work's popularity before turning to lesser-known Dominican literature proves insufficient when the Haitian representation in the work has yet to be fully addressed.

Marrero Aristy, deemed a loyal supporter of Trujillo at a young age, also wrote works praising the dictator's confrontation of the "border problem," mirroring typical anti-Haitian discourse of the mid-twentieth century Dominican Republic. The writer's three-volume work, *La República Dominicana: origen y destino del pueblo cristiano más antiguo de América* (1957-58), is dedicated to Trujillo and sings the dictator's praises. It also recreates historical rebellions of black slaves in the Dominican Republic, siding completely with the lighter-skinned Dominican slaveholders. In the following pages, while focusing primarily on the representation of Haitians in *Over*, I will reference both works to illustrate how Marrero Aristy succeeded – albeit under the censorship of the Trujillo regime – in re-imagining an insular community where the space for Otherness, namely *haitianidad* ("Haitianness"), is malleable. In order to probe the text's alternative representation of the Haitian subject, I will continue the direction outlined in my introduction on geography, emphasize the novel's clear focus on Haitians as opposed to other foreign laborers, and consider the protagonist's outwardly sympathetic stance concerning the Haitian customers that kept his store in business. Prior to this analysis, a closer look at the author himself is necessary in order to understand the complex underpinnings of race in the novel.

Maggiolo's "Tipología del tema haitiano," outlining multiple ways in which Haitians can be represented in literature, points to the complexity of any given novelization of the Haitian subject. This complicity is furthered when the author of the

text itself is a prime example of racial uncertainty. Marrero Aristy was the son of a cattle rancher, and his family lived comfortably until they were forced to flee the Dominican Republic for economic reasons during the United States' Intervention from 1916 to 1924. After spending nearly a decade in Venezuela, Colombia, and Aruba, the author returned to his native Dominican Republic in 1922 (Marrero Aristy, *Over* 5). As an adolescent, Marrero Aristy helped his father to rebuild the family's business while also completing primary and secondary school. At the age of fourteen, the young Marrero Aristy served as a correspondent to both *El Diario* and *El Nuevo Diario*.⁵⁷ From an early age Marrero Aristy's writing merited attention. The young writer's *crónicas* "se advertía el conocimiento profundo que tenía el autor de la vida, miserias y sacrificios de los peones y de los capataces, con los que desde casi un niño había convivido" (Marrero Aristy, *Over* 5). While he began working for the regime in 1930 at the age of seventeen and held various – some illustrious – posts, of particular significance is the fact Marrero Aristy worked as the Director of the National Salary Committee during the 1940s when many strikes in the sugar industry took place.⁵⁸ Marrero Aristy was the one to respond to outcries resulting from the "sugar strikes" on and around various Dominican plantations, enabling him to relive the realities he confronted in his literary creation of *Over*, as well as working with his father, an overseer, as a young boy.

Aside from the author's biography, it is crucial to also mention his personal battle with race. Marrero Aristy was *mulato*, and critic Torres-Saillant definitively marks him,

⁵⁷ These newspapers represented the most widely distributed papers in the country, as they are today. *El Diario* is the principal paper in Santiago and *El Nuevo Diario* is most widely circulated in Santo Domingo.

⁵⁸ Marrero Aristy also held the following positions: *Redactor de la Jefe de la Nación* and *Subsecretario de Estado y Trabajo y Economía Nacional*.

albeit problematically, as “the *black* Dominican intellectual” (Torres-Saillant, *Tribulations* 1100). It can be presumed, however, that the author of *Over* would have preferred to be recognized as “un blanco de la tierra,” a classification with origins in Santo Domingo at the start of the nineteenth century that permitted the *mulato* population to describe themselves racially as whites, confirming, as Torres-Saillant remarks, that “while their skin became gradually darker, the mentality of Dominicans turned increasingly whiter” (Torres-Saillant, *Tribulations* 1096). Marrero Aristy’s fictional recreation of a historical rebellion of black slaves in 1522 on a Dominican sugar plantation – included in his 1957 publication *La República Dominicana* (the second volume of the three) – represents a work in which Marrero Aristy elects to side with the planters instead of with the black rebels whose phenotypical traits he inherited. It is essential to note that Marrero Aristy’s offering of support to the white planters aligned with the culture of the period and the dominant Trujillo discourse. Had the author’s text encouraged the black rebels it would have been a red flag, marking him as a Trujillo dissident. Instead, in this instance, the “blanco de la tierra” author shows compassion for the white victims of the black-slave population, demonstrating, according to Torres-Saillant, his “inability to see his ancestry in the rebellious slaves rather than in the white planters, despite the phenotypical evidence to the contrary” (Torres-Saillant, *Introduction* 40). Marrero Aristy, in reference to his retelling of a slave rebellion in support of the white ruling class, reveals he was unable to perceive himself racially as anything other than white or European, incapable of including himself within his literary conceptualization of “blacks.”

The historical moment of the publication of *Over* – a mere two years after the Haitian Massacre at the border and during the first decade of Trujillo’s reign – is one of the key elements necessary for understanding the literary goals of Marrero Aristy. Moreover, the first half of the twentieth century marked an important period for the sugar industry in the Dominican Republic. According to Catherine C. Legrand, “from 1910 on, sugar accounted for more than 50 percent of Dominican export revenues...the demands of sugar production created the first large concentration of wage workers in Dominican history” (8). As previously noted, the 1920s witnessed a drop in sugar prices that resulted in changes to the workforce and hourly wages, but the early international interest in the Caribbean sugar industry should also be acknowledged, especially as North American interest in the Dominican plantation economy is pertinent to the historical context of *Over*. Notably, Dominican laws passed in the late nineteenth century during the dictatorship of General Ulises “Lilís” Heureaux (1888-99) are linked to the foreign managerial presence in Dominican sugar plantations. General Ulises not only allowed foreign companies to import machinery used in the plantations tax-free, but he also passed numerous other laws that incentivized large-scale agricultural production. As April J. Mayes asserts, it was easier for US citizens to buy land for the cultivation of sugar cane in the Dominican Republic than it was in Puerto Rico or Cuba (37-39).⁵⁹

Not surprisingly, the politics of the time favored the success of this industry – at the same time they also showed intrigue, or, rather, an obsession, with the redefinition of

⁵⁹ Texts centered on the Dominican sugar industry, as well as North American interest in the plantation economy, include the aforementioned *The Mulato Republic*, but also Juan J. Sánchez’s *La caña en Santo Domingo*, and the edited volume *Azúcar y política en la República Dominicana* (Eds. Andrés Corten, Mercedes Acosta, and Isis Duarte), among others.

the concept of dominicanness, or “dominicanidad.” Just before the 1939 publication of *Over* (written primarily in 1938 after the publication of the author’s collection of short stories, *Balsié*, earlier that year), in 1936, Trujillo solidified a new border agreement. This agreement, the Trujillo-Vincent Treaty, established Dominican dominance in the areas of the Dominican territory that were previously nondescript, un-claimed spaces between the two countries sharing Hispaniola. These zones were in large part populated by “rayanos,” individuals of mixed Dominican and Haitian descent. This specific Treaty represents an important historical marker of the antipathy Trujillo harbored toward the growing influence of the Haitian culture in Dominican territory. As Howard notes: “The boundary agreement in 1936 established the foundation for a program of *dominicanización*, but the most brutal example of this policy to reclaim the nation came a year later” (157).

The 1937 Massacre served as a flagrant action confirming the Trujillo era’s anti-Haitian discourse – a horrific border event that, as Torres-Saillant notes, “made it incumbent upon the scribes of the regime to produce an ample scholarship directed to demonizing Haitians and, thereby, justifying the unspeakable act” (Torres-Saillant, *Tribulations* 1093). Marrero Aristy formed part of this Trujillo “scholarship” – the intellectual project of the all-powerful regime – and his participation in this group, despite the color of his skin, defines the author as an individual who negated his possible role as a literary champion for Afro-Dominican writers in the mid twentieth century.⁶⁰ In a sense, Marrero Aristy, due to his identification with the Trujillo intellectuals, succeeded

⁶⁰ While Marrero Aristy was not, there were authors publishing in the early to mid twentieth-century who openly identified as Afro and wrote on themes concerning racial realities in the Dominican Republic. Aída Cartagena Portalatín, for example, openly asserted her racial identification as “mixed,” a black poet” (Torres-Saillant, *Introduction* 19), as did poet Blas Jiménez. See Dawn F. Stinchcomb’s *The Development of Literary Blackness in the Dominican Republic* (2004) for more on this topic.

in defining himself not only as the aforementioned “blanco de la tierra,” but also as a “blanco de la pluma,” with a frequent emphasis on this exaltation of whiteness and Eurocentric values. This negation confirms Jean Price Mar’s claim in *La República de Haití y la República Dominicana* (1958) stating “Nadie quiso ser negro y hoy mismo – salvo en la literatura – nadie se hace pasar por negro, ni siquiera aquellos cuya piel dice a las claras lo que son” (30). Price Mar’s insistence that “only in literature” might an individual claim blackness, aligns with Marrero Aristy’s decision to alternatively portray the Haitian subject in *Over* while denying his own race. Without knowledge of Marrero Aristy’s racial profile, it is likely one would not attribute the authorship of his works to a *mulato* or black, as Torres-Saillant labels the author. For this reason, the alternative view and commiserative representation of Haitians in his bestselling novel, *Over*, is of critical interest. It is in large part due to the novel’s portrayal of and sympathy with the Haitian subject that the “bestseller” was printed only once during the *trujillato*. The fact the novel was not reprinted until after the *trujillato* can also speak to the reality of the sugar plantation in the 1940s, largely controlled by Trujillo; any critique of the industry was interpreted as a critique of the Trujillo regime. Sommer remarks that the novel often turns into a “radical critique of exploitation” (“Populism” 263). The “ideological excess” inherent in the text places the novel in unsettled territory for any work passing censorship in the mid twentieth-century Dominican Republic, as only one permissible ideology existed, Trujillo’s.

Another possible reason for the novel’s successful debut in 1939 relates to the apparent erasure of the Dominican father figure, Trujillo. Sommer’s 1983 article “Populism as Rhetoric: The Case of the Dominican Republic” reads *Over* for the ways it

deviates from the form of populist romance. Due to the absent father, “Marrero’s charges are directed, of course, against a North American overseer” (265). Sommer later confirms: “When Marrero dares to isolate the functions of the ‘legitimate’ paternal state from the capitalists who masquerade as fathers at their convenience, he opens the possibilities both for justice decreed from above and demanded from below in a way that telescopes the shared space in *Over* between nationalist and socialist rhetoric” (“Populism” 265). Sommer’s analysis of the novel, however, does not focus on Marrero Aristy’s critique of the exploitative system in regards to its treatment of Haitians. Here, I am not interested in how there may or may not be a silent critique of what Sommer identifies as the “absent Father-figure” in the novel, but instead in how the work writes Haitians as something other than primitive, animalistic, and barbaric laborers, as they were commonly portrayed in works published during the *trujillato*. Michel-Rolph Trouillot’s *Silencing the Past* professes that the need for credibility “sets the historical narrative apart from fiction” (8). In *Over*, however, “credibility” can be reinterpreted as “alternate” with regard to the novel’s representation of Haitian workers, a deviation from the Haiti as written by Trujillo’s intellectuals, forcing readers to reassess their previously internalized histories and to re-conceptualize the twentieth-century Dominican author’s understanding of the Haitian population.

To approach a text with a specific geography in mind proves difficult when the setting is unspecified, regardless of a possible strategic symbolism explaining such geographical anonymity. The sugar plantation on which the action of *Over* is set has no name. The first person narrator, Daniel Comprés, refers to the location simply as “un batey sin nombre (30).” According to the plantation’s newest *bodeguero*, Daniel, it is

nameless because “los fundadores de este central, en su afán de abreviar tiempo y depersonalizar tanto a las gentes, a los sitios como a las cosas, lo han numerado todo” (30). One could argue that not only do the supervisors of this *central* depersonalize places and things, but also people; the laborers, too, are dehumanized, viewed as a collective mass that comes and goes with the passing of seasons. This observation, however, is more complex, seeing as one nationality of the plantation workers garners more attention than the others. While the reader gleans from contextual clues that the farm is located somewhere on the western side of the Dominican Republic near the Cibao region, the plantation remains unidentified, just as the hundreds of workers who arrive each *zafra*.⁶¹ While the anonymity of the plantation itself merits further analysis, the aforementioned detailed focus on the range of characters in *Over* that solidify the power structure on which the plantation thrives is also paramount. Marrero Aristy’s “no name” approach to the plantation fosters the idea the farm could be located anywhere, on any given island in the Caribbean. Caribbean theoreticians Edouard Glissant and Antonio Benítez Rojo promulgate this same Caribbean unity. Benítez Rojo’s understanding of an essential Caribbean character, as defined by a basic pattern shared by the region, leads to his conclusion that Caribbean peoples act “in a certain kind of way,” a decidedly “Caribbean way” that defines the geographic region and melds together Caribbean society. Much like the Caribbean, Marrero Aristy’s plantation is a product of complex, multi-national roots. Benítez Rojo borrows from Deleuze and Guattari’s machine metaphor to explain the historical links between different Caribbean cultures, stating “every machine is a

⁶¹ *Zafra* is the word, in Spanish, for “harvest.” In this context, the term refers to the time of year when sugarcane was harvested. The *zafra* normally takes place during the months of November to April and cane laborers work around the clock.

conjunction of machines coupled together, and each one of these interrupts the flow of the previous one; it will be said rightly that one can picture any machine alternatively in terms of flow and interruption” (6). This same machine metaphor can be utilized to better understand the workings of the anonymous plantation in *Over*, “a conjunction of machines coupled together,” the roots of the *finca* extending far beyond the Dominican Republic and its true multi-Caribbean and intra-island ownership and workforce lends itself well to Benítez Rojo’s conception of the Caribbean. Marrero Aristy’s farm, however, is not entirely anonymous. His careful, pointed focus on the influx of workers – pinpointing the Haitians from within the group of *cocolos*⁶² – unmistakably links the location of the farm to the Dominican Republic. To illuminate the representation of the Haitian subject in *Over*, I will first focus on this “singling out” of the Haitian workforce by the author. Then, I will turn to the novel’s protagonist and narrator, Daniel, to analyze the sympathetic rendering of the Haitian workers that his character makes possible.

When Daniel arrives to the *gran cañaverál*, as the narrator describes the anonymous farm on page 29, he first looks out the window, and just before he mentions the view of the *batey* from the car window, he notes: “los haitianos con quienes tropezamos se lanzan asustados entre la caña” (29). The sugarcane itself provides refuge to the Haitians from the car barreling down the narrow road. Ironically, the very plant

⁶² The term “cocolo” is used to describe, in general terms, non-Hispanic African descendants. In the context of the *ingenio*, the term is used to describe Anglophone and/or Francophone laborers. Although the term can refer to Haitians, it more commonly denotes dark skinned peoples from islands such as St. Croix, Tórtola, and St. Thomas. Stinchcomb remarks, “North American bosses considered the *cocolos* to be their best option because of religious similarities and the ability to communicate in English” (64). In *Over*, the term *cocolo* is utilized to identify West Indian immigrants in the Dominican Republic, different from Haitians. Dominican poet, Pedro Mir, however, more recently defined “cocolo” as “any Haitian that crossed the border” (Acosta 6).

that ties them to an oppressive, hierarchical economic system on the plantation comforts and protects them as much as it brings them pain and suffering. While this first mention of the plantation laborers only includes Haitians, it becomes clear in the following pages that the group is more diverse. The workforce comes not only from Haiti, but also “las islas inglesas” (165). Later, the apparent diversity of the laborers is mentioned again, this time as the “tromba humana que llegó de Haití y de las islas inglesas” (75). Of the relatively few mentions of the Haitian workers *and* those from neighboring islands, the Haitians are almost always mentioned first; the only inversion appears when the narrator refers to the workers as “cocolos y haitianos” (75).⁶³ The managers’ organizational strategy of numbering on the plantation mentioned previously – a tactic that extending to the human workforce in an attempt to dehumanize and depersonalize the laborers – is related to the plantation’s processing of new laborers. In this process the workers are not only numbered, but also given a fake, temporary name, one that Dominicans and English-speaking owners and managers from the US can more easily pronounce: “A cada hombre, se le ata en la pretina, en la pechera de la camisa o en el harapo que haga sus veces, el número que le servirá de identificación. Ya podrá llamarse Joseph Luis, Miguel Pie, Joe Brown, Peter Wilis o como mejor desee” (77). The narrator’s elaboration of this “receiving” process, functioning much like picking teams for a sporting event, also confirms that the *mayordomos* and *contratistas* often verbalized their preference for either *cocolos* or *haitianos* (77).

⁶³ As mentioned previously, the *cocolo* workforce represents workers from other Caribbean islands, largely the West Indies. The term *bracero* was used to refer to contracted workers, and this population of workers was largely from other neighboring, small islands. As noted in *Over*, West Indians also spoke English, which gave them an advantage on plantations with North American management.

While the distinction between “cocolos” (understood as those from the “islas inglesas”) and “haitianos” confirms that the seasonal laborers breathing life into the plantation each harvest are not only from neighboring Haiti, the focus turns again and again to Haitians, as opposed to the workforce as a whole, as those that suffer at the hands of both Dominican and foreign usurpers. Every individualized transaction recounted by Daniel is between himself and a Haitian, with the “islas inglesas” never specified nor considered as individual entities. In fact, the laborers from the English islands only appear singled out when the narrator and protagonist, Daniel, defines the term “abogado.” “Abogado,” within the plantation context, refers to literate members of the sugar mill’s workforce. The equation of certain workers from the “islas inglesas” with “abogados” permits the reader to infer the rarity of a Haitian arriving to work the *zafra* with the ability to both read and write (77). In Daniel’s capacity as shopkeeper, the attention returns singularly to the Haitians in the workforce. Daniel remembers his customers as, simply, “[los] haitianos que venían a comprar” (34). The narrator describes his interactions with the customers as transactional, with a clear understanding of the power structure at play: “los negros obedecen temerosos, con una sonrisa servile que solicita disculpa” (35). This stereotypical classification of the Haitian subject has a place in *Over*, but is overridden by the narrator/protagonist himself “solicitando discupla” for the treatment of the helpless, hungry, overworked Haitians.

Before focusing on Daniel’s sympathizing, alternative representation of the Haitian subject, it is imperative to mention an inversion of one of the common representation of Haitians as thieves. Balaguer, among others, was preoccupied by the Haitian’s affinity for stealing. He paints Haitians not only as cattle thieves – Prestol

Castillo was, likewise, concerned with this problem, as confirmed in the analysis of *El Masacre se pasa a pie* to follow – but also as silent thieves of Dominican jobs: “La fuerza de trabajo haitiana que emigra clandestinamente a nuestro país hace, por otra parte, una competencia desleal a la clase trabajadora dominicana” (156). In *Over*, however, the opposite transpires: a Haitian labels Daniel a “ladrón.” The narrator recalls:

Cierto día un haitiano, a quien le vendí una libra de arroz, me dijo ladrón. Al instante salté fuera de la tienda, machete en mano, dispuesto a ajustarle cuentas. – ¡Vuelve a decirlo! – le gritaba furioso. – ¡Vuelve a decirlo! El viejo, que estaba por allí, me atajó: – No haga esto, bodeguero. ¡No haga eso! Y aunque me veía encolerizado y dispuesto a herir, hablaba con calma, como quién está seguro de que será obedecido. ¡Pero ese haitiano me ha dicho ladrón, y yo no tolero que nadie me insulte! – fue mi alegato. Sin dar importancia a mis palabras, como so se les da a las de un niño, el viejo respondió: – Déjese de pendejía y aprenda a vivir en la finca. ¿Que le dijo ladrón? ¡J’a, carajo! ¿Y cómo se llama usted? Fue entonces cuando le dije mi nombre por primera vez. Me respondió con despreocupación: – Bueno, pué olvide su nombre. Aquí pa los dominicanos usted se llama ladrón, y pa lo s’aitiano volé. Ese e s’el nombre que nos dan a to lo s’empleado de la companya. No le haga caso a esa gente! (40-41).

Despite Daniel’s initial outrage – jumping over the storefront with machete in hand – he is easily calmed and in the following paragraph reflects on the incident in an overwhelmingly understanding, sympathetic tone. He excuses the outburst of the Haitian and instead recognizes the reality on the plantation for *all* Haitians: “ellos hablan sin ningún sentimiento de rencor o de maldad. Viven tan indefensos, han sido tan exprimidos, que ha no tienen energías” (41). He goes as far as to self-identify as a thief, proclaiming “en la finca tó son ladrón.” Recognizing stealing as an unavoidable action on the plantation, Daniel is able to turn his attention to the root of the problem, identifying the biggest, baddest “ladrón” of them all: “yo ta creyendo que la má ladrón de toitico son el blanco que juye en su carro” (41). The “blancos” – such as Mr. Robinson and Mr. Lilo – are the only ones able to escape the harsh realities of the sugar plantation, and they have

built the plantation on a shaky foundation of distrust and thievery. Such a system begets the question: If on the *finca* everyone is a thief, is it plausible to read the plantation as a microcosm of the country as a whole? The Island as a whole? Is anyone, in any setting, able to escape the “ladrón” classification? Is this all-encompassing classification a reflection of the Trujillo regime and the North American-interest in the Dominican sugar industry and the effect(s) and influence they had on the nation at large? Regardless, the distinguishing of Dominicans *and* Haitians as thieves produces an equalizing effect. This inversion of the “thief” stereotype, and later, the recognition that no one on the *finca*, nor in the country, escapes the classification, goes against Howard’s perception of the Haitian role in the Dominican Republic: “Haitians exist as an internal colony, marginalized individuals in a society that demands their labor, but refuses to accept their presence beyond that as units of labor” (30). The Haitian presence in *Over* extends beyond one of mere units of labor.

Obviated from the previous paragraphs, what at first appears as an anonymous labor force – working on a nameless plantation – later expands beyond the notion of a collective workforce by singling out the Haitians from among those from other neighboring Caribbean nations. Although the Haitian population is not individualized, the singling out of this group grants the workers a more human face. If the author’s generalization and depersonalization of the laborers appears at first unconscious, his repeated insistence on one specific group is far from accidental. Marrero Aristy’s purposeful choice to pinpoint the Haitian workers on the plantation highlights the suffering and oppression of this specific group on Dominican terrain. The following paragraphs, by more closely examining the narrator and protagonist of *Over*, consider

how this specifically identified collective is defended and championed by Daniel. How does Marrero Aristy write and represent the struggle of the Haitian peoples in a novel capable of passing the Trujillo censorship?

Daniel, as the protagonist of *Over*, serves as the work's moral compass.⁶⁴ It is a distorted morality, shifting throughout the two hundred pages of Marrero Aristy's text as Daniel struggles with the reality of his shopkeeper position and the suffering his own monetary success causes others. The novel is framed by his arrival to the plantation and his employment as the new *bodeguero* and his dramatic departure from the farm, unemployed and disillusioned. The title of the work itself not only draws attention to the foreign forces behind the plantation economy with the use of an English word, a word that also represents widely used plantation jargon, but also to Daniel's plight. Despite his superior position placing him above the seasonal laborers, Daniel is also proven a victim of the oppressive plantation system as he finds himself a prisoner of this very "over," an objective created by the foreign managers of the plantation to avoid deficits. This term, untranslatable, refers to the surplus of funds the Dominican workers on the farm stole from the laborers. A prime example of "over" is the shop owners' surcharge of food items, the North American company forcing this "policy" on the shopkeepers, so much so that they became convinced they were not committing an injustice. Daniel's comrade and fellow *bodeguero* convinces himself upon addressing the "over," "La compañía así lo

⁶⁴ Sommer, in her article "Populism as Rhetoric" identifies Daniel as, at the novel's start, the spoiled "anti-hero" who is later converted into a "variation of the romantic independent Husband who plans to repossess his Land, but one who would recognize his own weakness and be available for a stronger leader" (263). And yet, there is no rebellion. Daniel proves capable of thinking and independently advocating for the Haitians, but he is not led to action, not a "leader."

exige, y además, yo no robo” (45). Sommer confirms the presence and significance of the term “over” in the novel:

The word refers to the North American Ursurper, to be sure, but the reference is specifically to economic exploitation, that is, to a systemic injustice in the industry, and it thus does farther than a merely nationalist objection. Trujillo didn't plan to reform sugar production, but simply to own it. (“Populism” 263)

Daniel is consumed by the fear of the always-pending inventory of the supervisors, an anxiety that intensifies since he proves unable to follow through with the collection of this “over” and thus incapable of robbing the throngs of miserable workers – his customers – who inhabit the *batey*. The narrator questions, “Este maldito *over*, quién lo inventaría? ¿Dónde halló esta gente tan diabólica forma de exprimir” (47). The only answer Daniel is able to offer reads as a disconsolate observation, “¡El hombre hambriento vende hasta el alma!” On the following page, the “hombre hambriento” is equated more specifically to the Haitians, inferring that this population may be hungrier than others: “Los haitianos... mastican su hambre, como bueyes que se echaran tranquilamente a rumiar” (48). Hunger materializes in the novel as a trope, constantly alluded to in both a figurative and metaphorical sense. An endless, desperate hunger for food, change, and rebellion, among other things, permeates *Over*. Daniel describes an almost motionless, overworked Haitian in this way: “Su mirada, su cara, todo ¡todo él! decía claramente: HAMBRE” (101). The capitalization here stresses the importance of the word and the meaning it harbors in the text; the hunger felt by those oppressed by the plantation economy surpasses the physical and extends to the spiritual and emotional.

While a defense on the part of the Haitian population is palpable in the novel and Maggiolo's definition of a “literatura compadecida” is certainly plausible as an approach to reading the text, there is also a repeated, dominant discourse mirroring the

antihaitianismo of Balaguer and Peña Batlle in *Over*. Maggiolo's "Tipología del Tema Haitiano" defines "la literatura del haitiano compadecido" (107) as a work that accepts the Haitian subject as "un ser explotado; la narrativa lo albergó como la víctima total de la intrigas y del azar" (109). At times, Marrero Aristy's novel paints *lo haitiano* as a helpless and oppressed laborer, pinned down by the exploitative churning of Benítez Rojo's "maquina." Yet, at the same time, *Over* evades the classification of "pro-Afro," even though it forces the reader to *identify* with the Haitian workforce, by blaming North American owners and managers for the unjust plantation structure. Marrero Aristy consciously avoids taking his sympathy for the oppressed Haitians so far that it might have "ruffle[d] the feathers of the Trujillo guard and their ideological offspring" (Torres-Saillant, *Tribulations* 1105).

In large part, Marrero Aristy evaded censorship during the controlling *trujillato* period by electing to also include discourse reflecting the doctrine of the Trujillo intellectuals, thus aligning with a primitivist representation of the Dominican Republic's western neighbors. In reference to the singling out of the Haitian population as compared to those from other islands arriving in mass to work *la zafra*, *los haitianos* are also identified as "negros," "negrazos" (45), and "colorados teutones" (50). Often, the descriptions of Marrero Aristy's "negrazos" follow the same pattern as common twentieth-century Haitian stereotypes. The Haitian woman Daniel hires to clean his house, for example, proves inept at her job according to the narrator: "La negra y graciosa mujer no sabía cocinar, ni tenía costumbres, ni la más leve noción de lo que significaba limpieza" (175). Furthermore, the *bodeguero*'s first initial description of the Haitians upon his arrival to the farm likens the population to deformed, useless,

repugnant beings: “Veo sus caras sucias, erizadas de barbas, grasientas; sus narizotas deformes, sus bocas generalmente llenas de raíces podridas y de sus ojos desorbitados” (49). While the novel’s description of the Haitian subject is riddled with primitivist jargon typical of the era in which it was written, not only Haitians are associated with negative characteristics. The North American *manager*, Mr. Robinson, a man who is as grossly malicious as he is large, is described as having “un humor del diablo (22), with “ojos tan azules y desconfiados.” Although Mr. Robinson *and* the Haitian workers are described in negative terms, the Haitians do not have control of their own lives or their behavior or cleanliness – their existence on the plantation is conditioned by the company that exploits them. Mr. Robinson, however, *is* in control of his own behavior and appearance. Due in part to the negative characteristics shared by everyone on the plantation, and not just the Haitian population, Marrero Aristy’s regurgitation of the primitivist discourse that clones the dominant discourse of the early twentieth-century does not overshadow the overwhelming alternate, sympathetic visioning of the Haitian subject.

It is essential to note, however, that although Daniel is moved to sympathize with the Haitians on the *finca*, this emotion is not paired with action. While the narrator excuses the Haitians from any possible chance of revolt – they are only temporary workers who will later return home that “no pueden pensar en reformas” (65) – excusing himself from taking action is a more difficult task. Daniel proves unable to shift the exploitative nature of the *central* as his frustrations lead him to insult an assistant manager, and he is later fired. Daniel is exiled from the plantation and departs completely disillusioned, admitting that after losing his job and the downward spiral that followed,

“vivi borracho” (208). The novel’s attack on the foreign usurpers takes the place of the potential plot for a plan of action to come to the defense of the ultimately defenseless plantation laborers. The foreigners investing in and controlling the Dominican plantation economy are culpable for the oppressive plantation system – a narrative focus that removes Trujillo from the targeted position. The novel’s indictment of foreign capitalists, as Sommer remarks, succeeds in redefining the villain: “The Usurper of the People’s Land and property was not the dictator, but the North American sugar industrialists” (“Populism” 262). Casting the villain as North American managerial forces opposed to Trujillo is the key factor to the novel’s successful 1939 publication, slipping past the censorship eager to indict any foreign presence and exonerate Trujillo. To some degree, however, Trujillo – trained by United States Marine forces during the first US intervention in 1916 – is aligned with this adversarial North American presence. Marrero Aristy’s critique of racism in *Over* is complicated and convoluted; while there are constant “references to the disdain that Dominican workers feel for Haitians and West Indians” (Sommer, “Populism” 623), the protagonist’s own mistrust of whites and empathetic stance toward Haitians clouds the novel’s primitivist racism. While *Over* is not lacking in prejudicial representations of the Haitian workers on the plantation, as earlier criticism has noted, what is remarkable in the text is, as Eugenio Matibag describes it, “the pro-Haitian side of the narrative that denounced both the inhuman conditions of sugarcane plantations and the dehumanization of the cane-workers under such conditions” (168). Marrero Aristy, through an unadorned and direct narrative style, reveals the realities of the twentieth century sugar plantations and gives voice to the suffering of the Haitians and Dominican-Haitian populations. Despite the dominance of

anti-Haitianism in the early twentieth century, *Over* offers an alternate representation of the Dominican Republic's neighbors.

Freddy Prestol Castillo's literary "péndulo:" *El masacre se pasa a pie* and *Paisajes y meditaciones de una frontera*

Although *El masacre se pasa a pie* was published in 1973, twelve years after Trujillo's assassination, it was composed in the wake of the 1937 Massacre and buried in the backyard of the author's mother until it was deemed safe to "unearth" the manuscript. Despite the work's publication date, I have elected to include an analysis of this text in a chapter focused on the *trujillato* to illuminate the context on the time the work was written as opposed to published. A true product of the Trujillo era and an eyewitness account of the General's most atrocious, large-scale crime, *El masacre* deserves to be examined for both its deviation from and, at times, alignment with the Trujillo ideology. Moreover, the unique timeframe of the 1973 novel – with 36 years between production and publication – beckons the consideration of Prestol Castillo's literary production during this precise time gap, allowing for a more profound analysis of *El masacre*. For the purpose of this analysis, *Paisajes y meditaciones de una frontera* (1943), a collection of short essays neglecting to mention the Massacre, will be read alongside the same author's 1973 text.

In regards to *El Masacre*, every chapter uncovers a particular aspect of the Massacre, and the bounty of characters – Dominican, Haitian, and those of both nationalities – lends multiple perspectives to the horrific event. The fragmented stories outlined in each chapter can be read as anecdotal, individual testimonies recounting "el

corte.” The 1937 Massacre has many nicknames: “El corte,” “kout a” (literally, “the knife”) in Kreyól, or “El Perejil Massacre,” to name only a few. “El Perejil Massacre” is derived from the “operación perejil,” when Dominican soldiers asked those of African descent in the border towns to verbally identify the parsley plant. Due to the fact “r” and “j” are troublesome consonants for French and Kreyól speakers to correctly pronounce in Spanish, any individual uttering the word with a non-authentic Spanish accent was deemed Haitian, and killed.⁶⁵ While critics such as Pura Rondón have presumptuously reduced the author *and* narrator-character to a “símbolo de la degradación moral y material en la cual la tiranía trujillista tenía sumida la nación dominicana,” (39) Prestol Castillo in his dual capacity as author and character is much more complex, increasingly so in consideration of his lesser known texts.⁶⁶

Likening each fragmented story narrated in the text to “testimonies” brings to the fore the questionable and often debated genre of *El masacre*: novel or testimony? The text’s unresolved classification somewhere between the two is the first of several ambiguities I will address here in regards to Prestol Castillo’s most widely read work. Speaking to the text’s popularity, over 20,000 copies of *El masacre* were sold in the

⁶⁵ For more on the 1930 Haitian Massacre, see Richard Lee Turtis’ “Bordering the National: Race, Colonization, and the 1937 Haitian Massacre in the Dominican Frontier,” Chapter Five in *Foundations of Despotism* (2004).

⁶⁶ Another notable text of Prestol Castillo’s, written in 1945, is *Pablo Mamá*. This work details a border war and centers on the protagonist, of debatable ethnicity, who represents the leader of the restoration war and rules, in part, with his magical powers. It is valuable to mention the recurring theme of the Restoration War (1861-65), as well as the Haitian Occupation (1822-44), in Dominican literature.

period following its first publication, Sommer praises the “accessibility of Prestol’s writing – as opposed to the more self-consciously literary styles of other narrators – and the social significance of his testimony” (*One Master* 162). Ramón Antonio Victoriano-Martínez’s *Rayanos y Dominicanyorks* and Sommer’s *One Master for Another* perhaps contain the most thorough analyses of this notable text’s genre. While Victoriano-Martínez asserts the majority of critics and historians have identified *El masacre* as testimony, he recognizes the fact “nadie se ha detenido a examinarlo a profundidad desde esa perspectiva y utilizando las herramientas teóricas provenientes de los multiples análisis sobre el testimonio latinoamericano” (127). Dominican historian Bernardo Vega, for example, confirms the work is best described as testimony due to the author’s status as witness and the fact it was originally written shortly after the Massacre (326). Victoriano-Martínez, however, categorizes Prestol Castillo as a *secondary witness* who exercises his imperfect memory to make sense of notes recorded almost two decades earlier (129). Sommer, on the other hand, alludes to Prestol Castillo’s insistence in honesty and disuse of invention (*One Master* 89), leading her to label the book, testimony. Yet, even an “honest” recollection of an event is flawed, and as Iván Grullón asserts, the “libro representa con *relativa* exactitud los acontecimientos” (39; my emphasis). With the author’s “relative” certainty in mind, I have elected to refer to *El masacre* in the following pages as a fictional novel, just as the typical Dominican literary canon and the author, on the first page of the text, recognize the work.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ Although Victoriano-Martínez neglects to provide an obvious classification of *El masacre* as either novel or testimony, he recognizes the importance of approaching the text with “ojos de testimonio,” keeping in mind the testimonial character of the work and the complexities that this type of narrative attributes to the text. For Beverley’s definition of the Latin American *testimonio*, see *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth* (2004). It is

In support of my decision to identify *El masacre* as novel for the purpose of the present dissertation is the fact the text does not fit within the parameters of the Latin American testimonial novel as described by John Beverley, as it does not span the entire life of the author, or at least a significant portion, and its veracity as a fictional account is debatable. Beverley's voice, however, is not the only one to define the Latin American *testimonio*, and one of his faults is his failure to pay tribute to the importance of *two* voices in the creation of numerous foundational testimonies, such as *Biografía de un cimarrón* (1966). *El masacre*, too, can be read as a text with two voices, if one considers Prestol Castillo's original "notes" written directly following the Massacre and buried in his mother's backyard and his revision of those notes over two decades later as distinct. It is true, however, that *El masacre* shares commonalities with Latin American *testimonios* such as the aforementioned Miguel Barnet and Esteban Montejo's *Biografía de un cimarrón*, a testimonial narrative that also is "subject to the strategies of memory" (Luis, *Literary Bondage* 203). *Biografía de un cimarrón*, however, is labeled by Luis as a juxtaposition of narration and historical texts, while the events recounted in *El masacre* prove difficult to compare to historical annals written during the Trujillo era given the censorship during the dictatorship.

also worth mentioning that Prestol Castillo himself revisited the genre of his text. In an interview with Sommer, the author refers to the work as "simply 'my book,'" evading any generic tag: "Había aquí un debate sobre el género de mi libro, si era novela o no. Yo lo puse novela al terminarlo, pero lo consider simplemente mi libro" (*One Master* 161). The reader should also consider Prestol Castillo's *strategy* behind the fictional categorization of his work. If his novel is pure "invention," then Trujillo is not at fault since the author's mention of such border atrocities are figments of his imagination. Despite the fact Trujillo was assassinated over ten years before the publication of *El masacre*, his contemporaries such as Joaquín Balaguer still held positions of power in the country and challenges to the government were still dangerous.

The ambiguities permeating *El masacre* are not limited to genre. Other questions arising for a careful reader concern who Prestol Castillo identifies as the villain in the text, the author's possible primitivism – aligning Prestol Castillo with ideologies of Peña-Batlle and Balaguer – and whether the author condemns or justifies the Massacre. I believe that Prestol Castillo's recreation of the Massacre is the only novel with a precise and un-moderated vision of this history, influenced by the fact the author himself was stationed at the border as a government-paid lawyer, (holding the position of the Magistrate of Dajabón), arriving to the *aldea* just as the infamous event occurred. Prestol Castillo's representation allows readers to perceive Haitians – and the history of this particular event, one often written out of the historical annals of “genocide” – under a different and increasingly complex light. My analysis of the novel focuses on its value as a denouncement of the Trujillo regime and the 1937 Massacre, in opposition to the vast majority of critics and historians who too often liken the book to Trujillo propaganda and signal the examples of primitivism in the text without adequately addressing Prestol Castillo's failure to align himself completely with Trujillo and the dominant discourse.⁶⁸ By addressing the ambiguities the text produces – contradictions further reinforced when read alongside *Paisajes y meditaciones* – Prestol Castillo's alternate envisioning of the Haitian subject emerges. This approach can perhaps be understood as the “péndulo” to which Pedro Mir refers in *Las dos patrias de Santo Domingo* (1975) when he attempts to describe the Island composed of two nations as a “contrapunto danzando como un péndulo de un lado hacia el otro. Prosperidad-decadencia, trabajo-ocio, parte francesa-

⁶⁸ Fumagalli also notes the author's hesitation to align himself with the dominant Trujillo ideology of the time, noting his “inability and unwillingness to either fully embrace or resolutely reject dominant discourses” (141). Prestol Castillo, then, refused to take sides publicly.

parte española...” While Mir fittingly describes the complex relationship between the two countries by an inherently indeterminate pendulum movement, it can be postulated that Prestol Castillo is engaged, perhaps entrapped, in this same motion. The Dominican-Haitian border is the most obvious, transparent example of the contradictions mentioned by Mir, and Prestol Castillo is lost in the motion. *El masacre* is a text riddled with ambiguities – a direct response to the clashes between the communities on either side of the border mentioned by Mir – and addressing this nebulousness results in a reassessment of Hispaniola that includes a varied and complicated view of Haitians, straying from the Trujillo regime’s propaganda.

Before further considering each of the ambiguities identified previously, I want to address the geographic ambiguousness that begins the novel. Following the prologue, *El masacre* opens with a brief vignette. The author-narrator remembers his “Geografía Patria” course and his first, ill-informed introduction to “una aldea lejana:” Dajabón (15). Prestol Castillo critiques his past teacher and reveals his inadequacy, “El maestro hablaba rutinariamente. No conocía su país.” The author mocks his teacher with his small lips and frustrated appearance, recalling his privileged remark about the border towns, despite never traveling there himself: “Esos pueblos *deben ser* insoportables” (15; my emphasis). While apparent from the sarcastic tone that the author takes offense to the *maestro*’s sorry attempt at accurately describing the “frontera,” the naivety of both the teacher and the author-narrator in this moment should not be overlooked. Before the author-narrator was sent as magistrate to Dajabón, he – just like his teacher – “era extranjerizado en sus preferencias” (15). Returning to the quote “esos pueblos *deben ser* insoportables,” it is the “should be” (*deben ser*) that demands critical attention. Prestol Castillo’s recollection

of his childhood teacher’s remark, including this specific auxiliary verb, sets the stage for his own response and challenge concerning just what these towns “should be.” Or, rather, what the *extranjerizado* teacher believes or assumes them to be, they are not.

This start to the novel, rooted in geographic uncertainty, is only the first signal of the importance of space and geography in the text. Shifting to an analysis of the physical, material text itself, it is noteworthy that the names of places – cities, countries, street names, etc. – are at times bolded.⁶⁹ Prestol Castillo’s decision to highlight certain words in this way is selective, as only certain places, along with the occasional title or person name, are singled out. Figure 1 on the following page, (also available as a digital, interactive map online), illustrates the various place names bolded in *El masacre*. The dot on the map is larger for each time it is bolded (as opposed to mentioned) in the text.

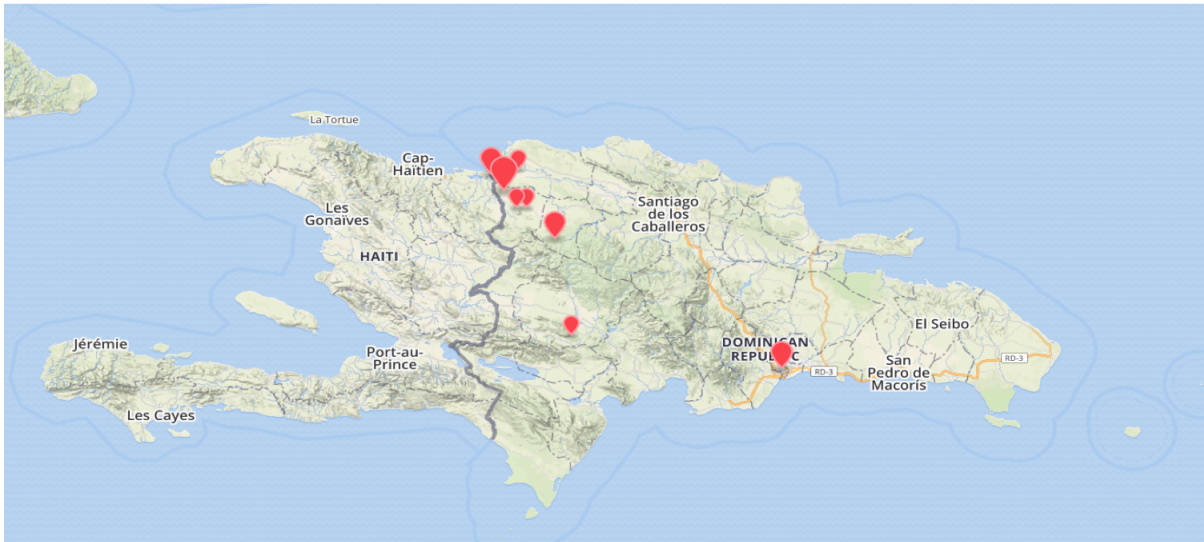


Figure 1. Re-Mapping Hispaniola: Digital (Interactive) Map⁷⁰

⁶⁹ This selective bolding of certain words in the text appears in the first four editions of the novel published by Taller (1973, January and February of 1974, and 1977 editions), as well as later editions that are reprints of the first editions published in the seventies.

⁷⁰ To see the interactive version of this map go to: www.remapping-hispaniola.org

While there are 24 instances where a place or geographic marker (like the Massacre River) appears bolded, the most commonly bolded location, (bolded in the text six times), is Dajabón, the novel's geographic center. As noted on the digital map, there are instances when a certain geographic location is referenced by another name. Dajabón, for example, appears as "provincia" (36) when referencing the border town and Santo Domingo is charted on the map for instances in which geographic markers located inside the capital city are mentioned. If one clicks on the largest red point on the map – Dajabón – one can see an example of this place name bolded in the text. While there seems to be no thematic pattern to the highlighted reference points and no clue as to why places that surface more than once in the text are only occasionally reproduced in bold font, the visualization of the points on the map reproduced here shows all highlighted geographic markers fall within the limits of the Dominican Republic, with the exception of Spain.⁷¹ As mentioned previously, the digital rendering of this map indicates the number of times a bolded geographic marker is mentioned by the size of the point on the map (the points that appear more often, such as "Dajabón" appear visibly larger). Furthermore, when one clicks each point on the map, the frequency with which each location is bolded in *El masacre* is provided.

The fact all bolded locations, with the exception of Spain, are in the Dominican Republic is not to say Haitian cities are never mentioned in the text. Ouanaminthe or Juana Méndez (a reference to the Spanish pronunciation) – the Haitian counterpart to Dajabón – is mentioned numerous times, as well as Jacmel, the capital of Haiti's Southeastern Department. Likewise, the Dominican Republic is bolded on page 65,

⁷¹ Use the zoom-out feature on the map to enable Spain to come into view.

whereas the country name Haiti is never once stressed. While it may appear Prestol Castillo sought to call attention to the importance of Dominican land over Haitian land, one should reconsider the primary subject of the novel: Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent. In this sense, the bolding of Dominican place names accentuates the Haitians' place within them and provides an answer to the author-narrator's rhetorical question toward the end of the novel on page 71: "De quién es esta tierra?" or "Whose land is this?" One can interpret "esta tierra," "this land," as all the points on the map above, all products of Haitian hands, inhabited by Haitian bodies. Furthermore, the passages in which these bolded place names appear highlight the presence of the Haitian subject within them. Santiago de la Cruz, a town in the province of Dajabón, for example, is cast as a town where Haitians live and work.⁷² The first mention of Santiago de la Cruz in the book is as follows: "Dominiquén pas vaut' ...Lo ha pensando siempre mientras vive como dominicano en una tierra que no es la suya. 'Dominiquén pas vaut' ...mientras servía como esclavo para el patrón mulato de **Santiago de la Cruz**, trabajando en el alambique o en el cañaveral arreando ganados hasta Puerto Plata, desde Dajabón" (60). This quote highlights, as do various others in which a bolded place name appears, the integral role Haitians play in Dominican communities. Here, an anonymous Kreyól speaker reminds himself, tauntingly, of who works the eastern lands of the Island, concluding that it is he and his Haitian brothers who work tirelessly at the hands of unjust Dominicans. He repeats in Kreyól, perhaps to embolden himself, "Dominiquén pas vaut," or "Dominicans are worthless."

⁷² Dajabón is name of both the capital city of the province and the province itself.

Another example of the bolding of a place name contained in a passage in which the Haitian subject is pronounced is a description of Angela Vargas, devoted Dominican teacher in an impoverished border town, working in a school with Haitians and other pupils of mixed Haitian and Dominican descent. (This quote is reproduced on the digital, interactive map as well): “Angela Vargas...es la única persona que sabe eso de que hay una **República Dominicana**. Qué es eso?...dirían los asombrados habitantes del paraje...” (65) Here, it is apparent the inhabitants of the border town have no concept of nation-state. They ask the teacher, bewildered and innocent, “What is this...The Dominican Republic?” The bolding, then, of certain geographic markers at specific moments in the novel can be understood as purposeful on the author’s part if the context of each quotation is taken into account and the passages are read as narrative representations of Dominican spaces shared by both Dominicans *and* Haitians.

Similarly, Prestol Castillo’s 1943 publication *Paisajes y meditaciones* keeps geography at its core – even the title draws the reader’s attention to the importance of place. In addition to the title, *Paisajes* includes the words “ruta,” “camino,” or “paisaje(s)” within the text numerous times and with varying connotations. This repetition draws attention to the limitless, flexible definition of routes in reference to the Dominican-Haitian border. Frequently, the use of “ruta” is a reminder of a historical route, such as “la vieja ruta” (34) or the route that “ya la había trazado en antiguo bucanero” (58). Aside from the notion of a route as a historical marker, highlighting paths of the past – signaling their change over time – the words “paisaje” and “ruta” are also utilized to denote a physical map of the island. On page 55 Prestol Castillo uses the mention of “paisaje” as a transitional phrase in his writing after addressing the spiritual,

historical, and cultural differences between Dominicans and Haitians: “Ahora volvamos al paisaje, que tiene la loma de siempre y el eterno negro.” The word “route” is also used in a more metaphorical, historical sense to refer to the history of the Dominican Republic: “Y es que nuestra Historia jamás ha tenido semejante ruta” (44). When distancing the history of the eastern side of Hispaniola from that of the western side of the Island, Prestol Castillo’s use of the word “ruta” signals the importance of geography and place within this history. Moreover, the text itself follows the author-narrator’s route, atop a mule, along “la Línea.” Although *Paisajes* was published in 1943, Prestol Castillo confirms his “ruta” took place in 1938: “Mi ruta fué en 1938” (14, *sic*).⁷³ The author’s ownership of the route – “*mi* ruta” – implies that the notion of a path or passageway changes on an individual basis; any *camino* is thus subjective and unique to each *caminero*. When Prestol Castillo refers to the *castizos* (individuals of mixed descent) roaming the border region, he confirms: “los hombres han vagado sin rutas nacionalistas” (41). This quote suggests the idea of a route as present, but indefinable. Prior to this quote on page 41, the author claims these border inhabitants as individuals with a “nebulosa noción de nacionalidad.” Aside from the tongue twister’s attempt – “nebulous notion of nationality” – to define the *castizos*, the phrase can also be read as marking Prestol Castillo himself as an intellectual who is unable to come to terms with his own self-identification. He, too, has a “nebulous notion of nationality” in that he sympathizes with, or at least understands, the situation of the Haitians and Haitians of Dominican descent. He proves, however, unable to perceive a trace of himself in these hybrid subjects.

⁷³ This date is important, as it confirms Prestol Castillo travelled the border and drew influence from his “ruta” for *Paisajes y meditaciones*, after the Massacre took place in 1937.

Beyond geographic ambiguities, I want to also address contradictions in the text mentioned previously in the following order: 1) Who is identified as the villain in *El masacre*?; 2) Does Prestol Castillo reduce the Haitian subject to primitive, animalistic beings?, and; 3) Does the author-narrator condemn or justify the Massacre? Attempting to identify the villain of *El masacre* and the contradictions surrounding this characterization addresses the question permeating the entire novel: Who is to blame? Trujillo was irreversibly transparent about pointing his accusatory finger at the Haitian population for the deterioration of the border region, regardless of the 1936 border treaty: the Trujillo-Vincent Treaty.⁷⁴ Trujillo's speech in Dajabón decrying the growing number of Haitians in the area and their strengthening influence on *la frontera* that occurred only days before the Massacre – a warning not enough Haitians and Haitians-Dominicans took seriously – explicitly stated action would be taken: “¡Los haitianos! Su presencia en nuestro territorio no puede más que deteriorar las condiciones de vida de nuestros nacionales. Esa ocupación de los haitianos de las tierras fronterizas no debía continuar. Está ordenado que todos los haitianos que hubiera en el país fuesen exterminados” (Cambeira 183-84). Just as Trujillo refused to relegate himself to the role of bystander while the western territory of the Dominican nation became increasingly populated by Haitians, Prestol Castillo proved unable or uncomfortable with the simple role of

⁷⁴ A mere one year before the Massacre, Trujillo solidified a new border agreement: the Trujillo-Vincent Treaty. This treaty formally divided what were before anonymous border zones, inhabited largely by *rayanos*, individuals of mixed Dominican and Haitian ethnicity. The treaty also signaled the increasing influence of Haitian culture in and around the Dominican borderlands. The booming sugar industry (along with the thousands of Haitian workers keeping the sugar mills afloat), the 1936 Trujillo-Vincent Border Treaty, and the 1937 Massacre represented a triple threat to the country's program for “dominicanization.”

observer, a muted *testigo* to the horrific events of the Massacre. At times guilty of elitist assumptions and influenced by the dominant discourse, Prestol Castillo is neither unaware nor neglectful in his writing the robbery of Dominican cattle by Haitians.

Blatant quotes such as “otra causa de la extinción del ganado era el robo de los haitianos” (29) confirm the “ladrón” classification and position Haitians as cattle thieves. Prestol Castillo, however, is hesitant to equate the Haitians with criminals, describing the return of the cattle at nightfall and recognizing the Haitians as the cultivators of Dominican land, left unattended after the Massacre:

Vemos estos inmensos prados de la frontera y asalta una pregunta: ¿De quién es esta tierra?...Enantes, abandonada. Luego cultivada por Haití, que la pobló de estancias y frutales – cafetos, aguacates, mangos, sombríos – y ahora desolada, bajo crimen. ¿Para qué?... ¿Quién vendrá a esquilmar estos cafetales abandonados, estas praderas vacías? (71)

Furthermore, the author perceives the cattle after the genocide as “vacas tristes” (23), suggesting that even the once stolen animals grieve the Haitians’ absence. While Prestol Castillo is not convinced the Haitians are the enemy – and in the above quote portrays them as the cultivators and fruit-bearing hands of the Dominican land – neither are the soldiers in the book. As Sommer clarifies, “Many *reservistas* understand that they, like the Haitians, are victims of Trujillo, the sole beneficiary of the massacre” (116). Capitan Ventarrón and his men turn to alcohol to forget the atrocities their hands commit and to assuage their guilt, but are unable to wipe away the blood on their hands, nor running through their veins. Ventarrón, for example, “recordó en un momento que su abuelo era de Haití” (28). In Sommer’s analysis of *El masacre* as a populist romance she asserts that the soldiers are “portrayed almost uniformly as reluctant to kill the Haitians, or at least ambivalent because of the way traditional anti-Haitian sentiments conflicted with their

first-hand experience with hard-working and modest Haitian neighbors” (*One Master* 169). Similar to the *reservistas* ambivalent attitudes, the Dominican cattle ranchers and civilians are unable to fully comprehend the scope of the Massacre: “Los dos hateros blancos ven pasar el acontecimiento y no aciertan a explicárselo” (Prestol Castillo, *El masacre* 90).

While the *hateros* exploit the Haitian workforce, they recognize their importance to the economy of the Northwest Territory and the aftermath of the Massacre brings only silence. The eerie silence and desolation in the wake of the Massacre is referenced countless times in the novel, as if to confirm the border community is not whole without the Haitian presence: “Es silencio, quietud en el paisaje y en el llano verde” (43); “Una paz que espanta” (47); “la ciudad de Dajabón es callada y sin luz” (72). The response of silence to the Massacre is, in a way, the environment, *la tierra dominicana, fronteriza* – a land cultivated by the hands of individuals of Haitian descent – paying tribute to lives lost. The uncertainty is wiped clean, and instead the *hateros* are left with nothing. While at times one could fleetingly read the enemy as the Haitians, the drunk *reservistas*, or the unknowing *hateros*, the blame unequivocally falls on the “superior commander” (Prestol Castillo, *El masacre* 46). Unlike Marrero Aristy’s *Over*, Prestol Castillo does not turn toward a foreign oppressive power, but instead blatantly portrays Trujillo as villain. While Sommer agrees the true enemy in *El masacre* is Trujillo, she positions the enemy as not easy to decipher:

...the enemy is so confusing here. The government and Dominican nationalist tradition identifies the Haitian as Usurper, as when the imaginative federal judges explain away the massacre as “combates campales entre bandas de campesinos haitianos, usurpadores, y bandas de campesinos dominicanos” (117). But the combination of the words “campesinos” with “usurpadores” for the Haitians remains an unconvincing juxtaposition. The idea of hard-working and modest-

living Haitian farmers cannot conjure up the image of an illegitimate and oppressive exploiter. Even the judges' fabrication makes one think of a balanced struggle in which neither side is inherently right or wrong. (*One Master* 186)

This juxtaposition of the characterization of the Haitian subject in *El masacre* – the fact non-Haitians are also described as thieves and as the exploiters – is of foremost importance. The representation of the Haitians as tireless workers and “good” men – referred to numerous times in the novel as “buenos hombres” – trumps the more negative portrayal in the piece that adheres to the anti-Haitian ideology of the era. The inclusion of both representations of Haitians cancels out Trujillo's depiction of the Haitian neighbors and aligns the general depiction of Haitians in the novel with what Veloz Maggiolo describes as “el haitiano compadecido” in his aforementioned “Tipología del tema haitiano.” The enemy is not as “confusing” as Sommer suggests, a point clarified when the historical context of the Massacre and *trujillato* are considered alongside a reading of *El masacre*.

Prestol Castillo unifies the soldiers, cattle ranchers, and Haitians by a common preoccupation: survival. Each of these collective presences in the novel are presented by the narrator as products of their environment, engaged in a daily battle to acquire the resources needed to subsist in what can be considered a “cultura de carencia” (Rondón 37). Grullón categorizes the thievery of cattle as “robo que no podía evitarse” (31). The narrator appears to agree with the unavoidable aspect of thievery. Moreover, an accusatory finger proves difficult to point when the Haitians were taking back the fruit of their own labor, indicating numerous times the root of the thievery, “robar para comer” (Prestol Castillo, *El masacre* 99). The characters of *El masacre*, perhaps, compose a cast of minute “villains”: the *hateros* exploit the Haitian workers, the Haitians steal

Dominican cattle, and the makeshift soldiers kill innocent Haitians and Dominicans of mixed descent. The overarching presence of Trujillo in his capacity as general, not the Haitians, is obviously villainous. In *Paisajes y meditaciones*, however, Trujillo is cast as the opposite; he is uplifted and praised as “el único estadista dominicano que ha visto con ojos claros” the border “problem” (63), a view any work published during the *trujillato* in Ciudad Trujillo would necessarily share.⁷⁵ The text, in fact, is dedicated to the general and nearly every chapter culminates in acclaim for Trujillo and his decisiveness in seeking to regain control of the border region. If Trujillo relinquishes the role of victimizer in *Paisajes y meditaciones*, the collective Haitian subject – in a very straightforward manner – fills this void.

The second conflict surrounding *El masacre*, as well as the literary criticism surrounding the text, confronts the primitivism inherent in the irreversibly linked ideologies of both Peña Batlle and Balaguer. Looking more closely at the ways in which Prestol Castillo imagines the Haitian subject (and its interstices with the Dominican subjects) as well as the specific instances when his language has been regarded by certain critics as “primitivist,” I believe that the primitivism modeled by Peña Batlle and Balaguer is not repeated or justified in Prestol Castillo’s *El masacre*. For both Peña Batlle and Balaguer, equating the Haitian community to a social group marked by barbarianism is central to the progress of the Dominican nation as it proclaims the absence of these animalistic traits in Dominican society. While Haiti “vive inficionado de vicios

⁷⁵ The Dominican Republic’s capital, Santo Domingo, was changed to Ciudad Trujillo in 1936. N. Rodríguez marks this name change as “una de las iniciativas de adulación más dramáticas que se conocieron en la época” (*La isla* 2). Numerous national monuments’ names also changed at this time to pay tribute to the General. These name changes are prime examples of Trujillo’s attempts to transform and control Dominican popular culture.

numerosos y capitales y necesariamente tarado por enfermedades y deficiencias fisiológicas endémicas” (Peña Batlle 67), *El masacre* is set in the Dominican Republic, not Haiti. The division for Prestol Castillo is much less clear than it was for Peña Batlle in *Historia* or Balguer en *La isla al revés*. The author does not plot Haitians against Dominicans and delineate the differences between them; instead the border culture in *El masacre* serves as a major source of confusion and racial mixing. Anzaldúa’s poetic and theoretical depiction of a Border – with a capital B – encapsulates the aspects of a frontier that are not physical or spatial. Anzaldúa also alludes to the “confusion” that can manifest within the space of the border: “The ambivalence from the clash of voices results in mental and emotional states of perplexity” (*Borderlands* 100). The “clash of voices” reverberating along the Río Massacre are similar to those Anzaldúa perceives along the Río Grande. Both spaces – and all border cultures – give rise to a conjoining of “voices” that forces a merger between the two, Anzaldúa’s “herida abierta.”

The nationalities Prestol Castillo attempts to recreate on paper are more complex than Haitian *or* Dominican – they are more often Haitian *and* Dominican. The novel opens in the second chapter with a focus on the Río Massacre – “un río pequeñito que divide dos países” (*El masacre* 24) – on the banks of which two women are found washing clothes together at the water’s edge, one Dominican and the other Haitian. It is the sweat, song, tears, and laughter of both that runs through the dual-purpose water source and border. Again, in chapter four, a young Haitian who had grown up in the Dominican Republic meditates over her options: “¿Salir?...¿Huir, correr, hacia Haití?...¿Pero... ¿Cómo?...Es de Haití, pero allá no conoce a nadie” (32). Not only is the reader introduced to numerous Haitians with no connection, linguistic or cultural, to the

western side of the border but also individuals of mixed nationality. One example is the Dominican Manuelita and her family – her Haitian husband, Yosefo, and seven children of mixed descent. Albeit saved from the Massacre, “los hijos de Yosefo van a la otra tierra, la de su padre” (47). For the children, Haiti is not only “otra tierra,” but one that is non-navigable for the young Haitian-Dominicans who cry out in Spanish when they are forced to witness the Massacre. The author-narrator alludes to the irony of the family’s move with a hypothetical question concluding the family’s story: “¿Quién los entenderá en Haití?” (49).⁷⁶ Because they do not cry out in Kreyól, the children will not be understood; in Haiti, they are voiceless.

Despite Prestol Castillo’s inability, though strategic, to completely separate the Haitian from the Dominican in the border town of Dajabón, Victoriano-Martínez asserts that “Prestol Castillo no parece reconocerse en el haitiano o el rayano frente al cual siente y demuestra cierta simpatía en su texto” (114). The author’s inability to abandon his elitist assumptions and fully recognize the commonalities linking all residents of Hispaniola oppressed by Trujillo’s reign – himself included – in part results in his repetition of the official Trujillo discourse when describing the Haitian subject. The author-narrator describes the Haitians in animalistic terms: “Alma seca, vagabunda, del paisaje, que se guía por los olores, husmea las piedras, devora las distancias. El perro fronterizo, el perro, haitiano” (99). The latter sentence of this quote equates the three categorizations, while also suggesting, in reference to the specific ordering of the terms,

⁷⁶ Juan Nazario’s mixed-race family is thrust into the same situation as those of Manuelita and Yosefo. His children are labeled “catizos” (61, *sic*) and the children’s linguistic choice confirms this: “los hijos de Juan Nazario hablen en ‘patois’” (60). The Dominican Juan Nazario barely stops the troops in time before his family of *negro catizos* is slaughtered. He screams, “Peidone a estos negros!...que son mis hijos! ¡aunque sean mitad haitiano!” (62, *sic*).

that “haitiano” is the least specialized or important of the three. Literary critics are routinely drawn to this stereotypical, negative depiction of Haitians in the text. In recent critical studies of *El masacre*, the animalization of the Haitian subject forms a foundation of the analysis. Before considering examples of literary primitivism in Prestol Castillo’s 1973 novel, it is advantageous to look at the exceedingly more straightforward primitive language present in *Paisajes y meditaciones*. The *castizo*, defined by Prestol Castillo in *Paisajes y meditaciones* as synonymous with the Haitian subject, is defined as “un hombre que no tiene medidas civiles, sino medidas zoologicas” (23). The spiritual being of the Haitians is later described as “retardado, chato, primitivo” (30) and the blatant equations of the Haitian with the barbaric continues throughout the text.⁷⁷ Not only are the textual examples of this ideology multiple, but the author also cites founders of the barbaric representation of Haitians within the Dominican conception of nationality, such as Peña Batlle. Peña Batlle is quoted numerous times and is exalted as “el primer especialista dominicano en cuestiones de frontera” (35). In some instances, it is clear Prestol Castillo replicates Peña Batlle’s, as well as Balaguer’s, understanding of the epistemology (with roots in the spiritual ancestry) of Haitians – in reference to spiritual ancestry – as opposed to Dominicans, noting in the chapter titled “Somos distintos a Haití?” that “Nuestro negro, – similar al haitiano en la morfología – ha diferido totalmente del vecino en su ruta de evolución espiritual. El nuestro fué, espiritualmente, un español” (43). Pages later, the author clarifies: “El negro del Este es un auténtico español” (46). When compared to the transparent primitivism in *Paisajes y meditaciones*,

⁷⁷ Other examples include, on page 38: “Al través de este document se perfila toda una sociedad perezosa, en la que todos viven de la producción antural de la tierra, llámese bosque o animal” and page 50: “El negro de Haití es el africano más auténtico en las Antillas, vale decir, es el tipo negro menos evolucionado.”

the same ideology in *El masacre* is drastically less obvious. What reasons did the author-narrator have to tone down this language in his novelistic recreation of the 1937 Massacre, especially as one knows he was engaged with this specific train of intellectual thought when he wrote *Paisajes y meditaciones*, less than five years after the Massacre took place? This disparity highlights the broader scope in which the Haitian subject is represented in the 1973 novel.

And yet, there is no denying that Prestol Castillo, at times, regurgitates jargon born of the “dominicanización” of the border region to describe Haitians in *El masacre*, and there are numerous examples of this in the novel, albeit decidedly more subtle when compared to *Paisajes y meditaciones*. Victoriano-Martínez asserts that in Prestol Castillo’s 1973 novel, “el ser haitiano es un ser animalizado, reducido a pura naturaleza, a nuda vida” (116). If one agrees with Victoriano-Martínez that Prestol Castillo equates the Haitian subjects to animalistic beings in *El masacre*, it is important to clarify that the “seres haitianos” in *El masacre* are not reduced to a *collective* barbarism; the author rejects presenting the Haitians as anonymous subjects.⁷⁸ On the contrary, readers of *El masacre* are introduced to Tamí (26), Moraime Luis (32), Jean Pié (40), Yosefo (47), Mustalí Dois (59), “El Patú and his young son, Tusent, (75), Yusén (82), Mandín (96), and countless others. Given the gift of names, the Haitians in *El masacre* are brought to life; these are not nameless, dehumanized individuals whose lives Sargento Tarragón, (commanding the Dominican forces carrying out the genocide), and his men take. Further significance of the lack of anonymity when referring to the Haitians and Haitian-

⁷⁸ In *Paisajes y meditaciones*, unsurprisingly, not once is a Haitian or Haitian-Dominican considered on an individual basis or given a name. Instead, Prestol Castillo elects solely to address the group as a collective whole, offering no anecdotal evidence to contradict the Trujillo authorized discourse in regard to the Haitian subject.

Dominicans, Prestol Castillo includes the names of individuals with no anecdotal reference in the text. Tami, for example, is mentioned in passing: “viejos, como Tamí, el limosnero” (26); Jean Pié’s life is remembered only briefly: “Jean Pié, con 80 años, lo degollaron” (40).⁷⁹ Similar to Tamí and Jean Pié, many Haitians are mentioned in the text only fleetingly, hinting at the existence of unnumbered Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent affected by the Massacre, greatly exceeding in number those specifically addressed by the author-narrator. This avoidance, conscious or not, to group Haitians as a collective community characterized primarily by barbarism, does not deny the fact Prestol Castillo resorts or retracts to a primitive ideology at times. Such language, however, signals an internal struggle for the author himself. Diogenes Céspedes affirms the author’s muddling of elitism and his possible condemnation of the 1937 Massacre while also expressing that he is not convinced by Prestol Castillo’s outcry: “El hecho de que relate la matanza de los haitianos, que describa una cierta oposición al régimen de Trujillo, que el narrador se refocile añorando sueños aristocráticos en una estancia patriarcal, no nos produce ni frío ni calor” (150). This internal struggle of the author, perhaps, is derived from Prestol Castillo’s role as both judge – employed as the magistrate of Dajabón – and writer. The author’s struggle, permeating the pages of *El masacre*, is intensified with analysis of *Paisajes y meditaciones*, published during the

⁷⁹ The use of the name Jean Pié here could have ties to Juan Bosch’s story “Luis Pie” (written in 1942 and published in 1962). Luis Pie narrates how little value the life of a Haitian *bracero* had in the Dominican countryside. Luis Pie has a wounded foot from work on an *ingenio*, but is blamed for starting a brush fire in fact ignited by the manager’s cigar thrown carelessly from his car. Stories by Ramón Lacay Polanco (*Punto Sur*, 1958) and Bosch’s story mentioned previously, for example, provide alternatives to the markedly anti-Haitian narratives published in the 1930s and early 1940s as they began to gradually question and enter in conflict with the unconcealed contempt shown toward the Dominican’s neighboring state in earlier literature.

trujillato and dedicated to *el generalísimo* himself. In this text, there is no unequivocal struggle that defines or permeates the writing.

Tipping the scales of the novel's internal struggle with the reality of the horrific Massacre is an event the author-narrator refers to as a "delirious fever" (*El masacre* 139). In the aftermath of the Massacre and his attempt to come to terms with the genocide, Prestol Castillo has a nightmare about Touissant in which the Haitian general declares he will kill the inhabitants of the neighboring Spanish colony. "Santos Lourverture Toussaint" proclaims in the dream: "Esta tierra es mía... He pisoteado los blancos franceses... I ahora, pisotearé a los blancos españoles de Santo Domingo. Los degollaré" (137). This passage, toward the novel's end, is a reminder of the devastation and destruction imparted by the Haitian army – led by Dessalines and Christophe – at the start of the nineteenth century in the wake of the Haitian Revolution. Toussaint's appearance also hints at the abuses committed by Jean-Pierre Boyer during the unification of the island and the aggressive politics orchestrated by Faustin Soulouque in 1849 and 1855 in his attempts to re-conquer the Dominican Republic.⁸⁰ When the narrator awakens from his nightmare, the first thing he "sees" is an ocean flowing red with blood, just like the Massacre River. Clearly the narrator's vision and thought are impaired by the vivid dream, as he wakes with visions of the blood-red water and the screams of his dead neighbors in his ear. The chapter ends with a summary of his nightmare that mirrors the official, dominant discourse of the time:

⁸⁰ Soulouque was elected president of Haiti in 1847 and two years later, in 1849, proclaimed Emperor of Haiti. His reign was marked by violence, and although he ordered the Haitian army to invade the Dominican Republic numerous times, all attempts resulted unsuccessful in the Haitian's desire to annex the eastern side of the Island.

Me sorprendió meditando sobre la historia presente que veía con mis ojos, escrita en caracteres de sangre, y aquella historia de impiedad, despotismo y crímenes cometidos por los *haitianos*, aprendida en las clases de historia, en la infancia. (14; my emphasis)

Still in a state of shock following the events of the Massacre, the author-narrator ends labeling the Haitians as the criminals, influenced by the events haunting his dreams. Prestol Castillo's use of his "clases de historia, en la infancia" as a reference point, however, nullifies the blame he places on the Haitians, if one recalls how the novel begins: "El maestro hablaba rutinariamente. No conocía su país...El maestro era extranjerizado en sus preferencias" (15). Provided the narrator's teacher knew nothing of the history or geography of the border region, and it was possibly the same teacher – or a teacher similarly educated, elitist, and *capitalista* – who presented the Dominican Republic-Haiti history as one-sided, Prestol Castillo's blatant finger-pointing at the Haitian community after his dream loses significance. A blank in the novel's phrase "crímenes cometidos por _____" could just as easily be filled by "dominicanos" as it is "haitianos," and Prestol-Castillo has a back-handed way of highlighting this.

Manuel Robert, an alcoholic Dominican who loses his wife and children during the Massacre, is described in the wake of the tragic event as "Otro hombre, "un producto del Corte" (97). These words also fittingly describe the author-narrator after the Massacre. If it is true Prestol Castillo does not entirely abandon his elitist assumptions as evidenced by his return to use of jargon mirroring the vocabulary of early twentieth century Trujillo intellectuals, it is also true that the experience of the *Corte* changes him and alters his understanding of the Haitian subject. He is no longer the "extranjerizado" like his childhood teacher who viewed the Dominican-Haitian border as a black hole in Hispaniola's geography and history. In *El masacre*, the author-narrator exemplifies,

perhaps unconsciously, how traditional, nationalistic discourse has identified Haitians as violent, barbaric savages by his use of primitivistic discourse. In this way Prestol Castillo offers an answer, if not an excuse, for how such discourses “affect the Dominicans’ collective unconscious” (Fumagalli 142), including his own. The author-narrator pushes back against the authoritative discourse by recognizing Haitians affected by the Massacre as individuals. He also defies the dominant Trujillo ideology by divulging his personal confrontation of the border-region after the Massacre.

The final contradiction or ambiguity in *El masacre* concerns Prestol Castillo’s condemnation or justification of the Massacre. I consider the novel here a denouncement of *el corte*, despite the fact the text “se pronuncia contra el crimen y otras veces justifica” (Grullón 22). The work, in fact, reads entirely as a “mea culpa,” since the author-narrator is decidedly horrified by the crime. Sommer recognizes Prestol Castillo’s authorial distaste for the crimes committed at the border, gauging his disapproving response to the Massacre as “tension between elitist assumptions and his horror at the consequences” (Sommer 183). It is one thing to appear aghast when faced with the atrocities of the genocidal event, but this emotive response does not necessarily signify the narrator’s disagreement – or agreement – with Trujillo’s policies. The twenty-ninth chapter details the narrator’s flight from his post at the border, and he aligns himself as an *anti-trujillista* with this decisive action. Now in Santo Domingo, Trujillo’s secret service follows his moves, and the narrator deems it necessary to hide his “notas de la frontera” with his Mother (141).

Reading *El masacre* as a repudiation becomes the obvious choice when readers look more closely at Prestol Castillo’s 1943 *Paisajes y meditaciones*, a prime example of

a text *El masacre* could have mirrored more closely in terms of content, had the author wanted to follow the guidelines of the controlled, dominant discourse. Victoriano-Martínez asserts that the author perceives the Massacre “desde la posición de un funcionario trujillista que participa en un encubrimiento del genocidio y se limita a narrarlo” (118). Prestol Castillo, however, does not just narrate *el corte*. He experiences it, suffers through it, and painfully addresses the aftermath. Howard critiques the author-narrator for his inability to confront the realities of the Massacre (143); a critique that can be challenged by the question: “Compared to whom?” While *El masacre* is a subjective account or narration of the 1937 genocide, the author-narrator’s decision to record the event in novel form constitutes the most obvious, transparent form of “confronting the realities of the Massacre.” The “notas de la frontera” composing *El masacre* can be read entirely as a confrontation of the 1937 genocide, and Prestol Castillo’s insistence on telling the truth, a pillar of Sommer’s analysis of the novel, confirms the author’s deep-seated desire to not only do justice to those who suffered at the hands of Sargent Tarragón and his men, but to his own conscience – a conscience troubled by his reluctance to denounce the events with only words as opposed to actions, as seen by his reverence for the border-town teacher and his quasi-girlfriend, Angela Vagas.⁸¹ The author-narrator self-identifies numerous times as a coward (142), and this perception of cowardice and anxiety is likely a response to the contradictory, paradoxical nature of the text and to *El masacre*’s “inability and unwillingness to either fully embrace or resolutely reject Dominican discourses” (Fumagalli 141). On page 50 of *El masacre* the author-narrator makes reference to a writer who was ordered to the border by Trujillo to cover up the

⁸¹ Prestol Castillo refers to Angela Vargas as his “modelo de virtud” (142), expressing his jealousy for her ability to openly denounce the regime.

realities of the genocide: “El periodista sabrá que miente, contra su conciencia.” Might one consider Prestol Castillo’s occasional lapses in an otherwise overwhelming denouncement of the Massacre in the same light? He, too, lies against his own will as a product of an elitist society imprisoned by the authoritative, Trujillo-censored discourse.

Both Marrero Aristy’s *Over* and Prestol Castillo’s *El masacre se pasa a pie* are considered literary successes in the Dominican Republic, boasting more prints run and copies sold than the majority of twentieth-century texts on the Island. While the novels’ publication dates are separated by thirty-six years, they were written within the same two-year period, at the height of Trujillo’s reign. Admittedly, Marrero Aristy and Prestol Castillo were not the only Dominican writers active during the General’s thirty-one years in power. Other notable authors writing during this time – some mentioned previously in this chapter – include Juan Bosch, Ramón Lacay Polanco, and Aída Cartagena Portalatín. Bosch, for example, wrote from exile in Cuba during the greater part of the *trujillato* and published his well-known collections of short stories post 1961: *Cuentos escritos en el exilio* (1979) and *Más cuentos escritos en el exilio* (1999). Bosch was also part politician and historian; he founded the Dominican Revolutionary Party (PRD) and served as the first democratically elected president of the Dominican Republic (for a mere eight months in 1963). Bosh’s legacy stresses the unbreakable connection between literature and politics in the Dominican Republic; the dictatorship, its control over the sugar industry; and “dominicanización” policies and anti-Haitian ideology as the motivators for Marrero Aristy and Prestol Castillo. These two texts, while offering a literary commentary on the *trujillato*, prove increasingly interesting for the ways in which they alternatively portray the Dominican neighbor, Haiti. Veering from the national discourse

supported by the dominant Trujillo ideology and the “teóricos trujillistas” such as Balaguer, both *Over* and *El masacre* offer a representation of the Haitian subject that is, at times, both commiserative and sympathetic. Aligning with Veloz Maggiolo’s characterization of “el haitiano compadecido,” this alternative representation is not the only way to read both novels.

Both novels, while offering a less antagonistic visioning of the Haitian subject than the vast majority of literary texts written during the *trujillato*, do not deviate completely from the anti-negro state-sponsored ideology of the period, as they also incorporate the official discourse. *Over* and *El masacre* describe Haitians using primitivist language, characterizing their eastern neighbors as barbaric, uneducated, and unhygienic. The authors’ decisions to represent the Haitian subject sympathetically, alongside this regurgitation of the dominant, state-sponsored ideology reveals an understanding and lamentation of the treatment of Haitian laborers and Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic. Dominican intellectuals who engendered an environment for *antihaitianismo* and race-based discrimination in the country do not hesitate to classify the Haitians as the villains of an otherwise “pure” and “uncorrupted” Dominican society. For Marrero Aristy and Prestol Castillo, however, the role of villain is not assigned to Haitians. *Over* plots the villain and oppressive force within the *ingenio* environment as the North American managerial forces. *El masacre*, in a more overt attack, blames Trujillo and his henchmen for the Massacre and the deterioration of the Dominican-Haitian border communities. The fact Trujillo emerges as the villain in Prestol Castillo’s bestseller is the reason the novel was not published until well after the dictator’s assassination. The notion of censorship and the unrivaled power of the state-

sponsored band of Trujillo intellectuals for the majority of the twentieth-century can also explain why both authors, residing in the Dominican Republic during the *trujillato*, published texts such as *La República Dominicana: origen y destino* and *Paisajes y meditaciones*, praising the dictator and his anti-Haitian policies and ideology. Finally, the geographic ambiguity traceable in both *Over* and *El masacre se pasa a pie* results in a temporary erasure – albeit literary – of the Dominican-Haitian border. Marrero Aristy sets his novel, criticizing Dominican society and those in power, on an anonymous plantation, while Prestol Castillo begins his text with a reference to a misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the Dominican Republic’s border region. This geographic uncertainty proves vital in creating a new space for Haitians and Haitians of Dominican descent in Dominican literature from the Trujillo era.

CHAPTER 3

A DISAPPEARING ACT: MARCIO VELOZ MAGGIOLO'S *LÍNEA*

El discurso literario de Marcio Veloz Maggiolo es un grito adolorido, una denuncia estremecedora de una época sellada por el terror, el crimen rampante y la frustración.

*Un discurso que nos invita a no olvidar.*⁸²

Carlos Esteban Deive

Toward a Typification of the Haitian-Dominican Border?

Marcio Veloz Maggiolo, perhaps the most prolific Dominican writer of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, wears many hats. Winner of the Dominican Republic's *Premio Nacional de la Novela* in 1962, 1981, and 1992, Veloz Maggiolo is not just a novelist, but also a poet, playwright, essayist, archaeologist, anthropologist, and historian.⁸³ Expertly diverting the pressure to be one thing and not the other – to decide between poetry and archaeology, for example – suggests another significant feat of the accomplished scholar and writer. As Carlos Esteban Deive remarks,

Lo que nos asombra de él no es esa variedad de intereses. Lo realmente significativo, lo que lo destaca y distingue, es que en cada una de esas facetas de su quehacer ha sabido regalarnos la impronta de su capacidad, su ingenio, de su inteligencia privilegiada y de su audacia de creador e investigador. (65-66)

⁸²“Marcio Veloz Maggiolo o la pasión por el saber,” 59-60.

⁸³ The *Premio Nacional de la Novela*, awarded by the Fundación Corripio and the Educational Secretary of State, was awarded to Veloz Maggiolo to honor both his fiction and his anthropological and archaeological investigations. Veloz Maggiolo is considered one of the most prominent Caribbean archaeologists and has published widely in the area; some of his most well known articles include “Arqueología prehistórica de Santo Domingo,” “Las sociedades arcaicas de Santo Domingo,” and “La isla de Santo Domingo antes de Colón.” Veloz Maggiolo is also the recipient of the *Premio Nacional de Poesía* in 1961 and the *Premio Nacional de Cuento* in 1981.

In large part, it is the author's overarching academic formation and wide-reaching interdisciplinary interests that allow him to converse with Hispaniola's past in a unique and informed manner. Born in Santo Domingo in 1936 during Trujillo's reign, Veloz Maggiolo's experience growing up and receiving his education in a country under an infamous dictator's rule reflects in his literary corpus. Veloz Maggiolo is a writer, and moreover, an intellectual, who crosses borders. Not only does his work, both literary and otherwise, highlight the cross-sections between different academic fields, but the themes of his novels often are grounded, in a literal sense, on the border itself. The two novels examined in this chapter, *El hombre del acordeón* (2003) and *La vida no tiene nombre* (1965), reveal the complexities of the Haitian-Dominican border region and the relationships between Dominicans, Haitians, and Dominicans of Haitian descent.⁸⁴

In María Cristina Fumagalli's words, Veloz Maggiolo "weaves a vivid and diversified tapestry with the complex human, political, and cultural fabric of the northern borderland" (153). The ambiguous and shifting border territory of the Dominican Republic and Haiti correlates directly to the violent, repressive Trujillo regime and the presence of the *frontera* permeates Veloz Maggiolo's fiction. Critics such as Neil Larsen and Ana Gallego Cuiñas have studied at length the repeated return to the Trujillo era in contemporary Dominican narrative and countless critics have pointed to what De Maeseneer refers to as the "brega con el pasado" (*Encuentros* 23) in which Dominican writers find themselves incessantly engaged, unable to break with the past. The frequent return to the past in Dominican literature differentiates itself from other Latin American

⁸⁴ Other well known novels by Veloz Maggiolo include, but are not limited to, *El buen ladrón* (1960), *Ritos de Cabaret* (1992), *Trujillo, Villa Francisca y otros fantasmas* (1996), *Nosotros los suicidas* (1965), *Los ángeles de hueso* (1967), *De donde vino la gente* (1978), *Florbella* (1986), and *El jefe iba descalzo* (1993).

literary traditions often rooted in national historical events as, in most cases, these foundational historical moments are represented by Discovery and Independence. The anchor for Dominican novels, however, is the *trujillato*. Gallego Cuiñas, in *Trujillo: El fantasma y sus escritores*, offers various terms to identify this sub-genre of historical narrative: “novela del trujillato,” “narrativa de Trujillo,” “narrativa trujillista,” or “narrativa trujilloniana” (16). In addition to an overabundance of terms, critics also disagree on what novels can be categorized as Trujillo narrative.⁸⁵ Giovanni di Pietro, for example, classifies novels written between 1930 and 1961, the thirty-one year reign of the dictator, as Trujillo narrative (205). Gallego Cuiñas further clarifies in her study that any novel categorized as “trujillista” must also reflect upon the regime itself (17). The Trujillo narrative, written following the assassination of Trujillo in 1961, comprises the dominant literary discourse in the Dominican Republic (Gallego Cuiñas 19); Veloz Maggiolo enters the scene during this time frame.⁸⁶ It is important to note that an interest in the figure of the dictator is not a Dominican phenomenon, but can be traced to the decade following the Latin American literary Boom of the 1960s, with novels such as Gabriel Garcia Marquez’s *El otoño del patriarca* (1975), Alejo Carpentier’s *El recurso del método* (1974), and Augusto Roa Bastos’ *Yo el Supremo* (1974). Prior to the Latin American literary movement and the post-Boom period that followed, Miguel Ángel Asturias’ canonical novel *El Señor Presidente* (1946) is another novel with a focus on the

⁸⁵ For the remainder of this chapter, I will use the term in English, “Trujillo narrative,” to reference this literary sub-genre.

⁸⁶ Some critics prefer to refer to Trujillo narrative written after 1961 as “(neo)trujillato” narrative. As De Maeseneer notes, “hasta hoy en día siguen sobreviviendo en la sociedad y la política dominicanas estructuras típicas de lo que unos llaman neotrujillismo y otros, autoritarismo, para usar el término menos connotado con el context dominicano” (*Seis ensayos* 20).

figure of the dictator. The shift signaled by the novels mentioned previously, however, marks a pointed interest in the aesthetics of the text, as these novels oftentimes enlist the dictator as protagonist, thus imagining and revealing the tyrant's private thoughts and desires.⁸⁷

Any study of “narrativa de dictador/dictadura,” or in the case of the Dominican Republic, Trujillo narrative, would be remiss to not include the literary production of Veloz Maggiolo. His longstanding presence as a Dominican writer whose literary corpus is a direct reflection and critique of the Trujillo regime shifts the question critic Neil Larsen poses in his study of *narrativa trujillista*: “¿Cómo narrar el trujillato?” instead to “¿Quién narra el trujillato?” An irrefutable answer to the latter question: Marcio Veloz Maggiolo. Veloz Maggiolo's narrative production is proof of Larsen's statement that the image of Trujillo and his regime in Dominican literature “se niega a desaparecer” (123). While Trujillo narrative is not the focus of this chapter, this persuasive “Trujillo phenomenon” (Gallego Cuiñas 12) constitutes the ideal starting point prior for examining both *El hombre del acordeón* and *La vida no tiene nombre*. Even Veloz Maggiolo's first novel, *Judas* (1962), (for which the author won his first *Premio Nacional de la Novela*) is a commentary – albeit understated – on the Trujillo dictatorship. The novel centers on the life of the biblical Judas and considers what led him to betray Jesus Christ. As González-Cruz confirms, one possible reading of the novel views the father of Judas, Simón de

⁸⁷ This sub-genre of historical narrative, centered on the figure of the dictator, is often classified within the field of Latin American literature as “literatura del dictador” or “novela del dictador.” Sharon Keefe Ugalde instead suggests employing the term “narrativa de dictador/dictadura,” this latter classification only addressing novels with a *principal* focus on the figure of the dictator or effects of a given dictatorship (201).

Idumea, “como símbolo del tirano y Judas como representación del hombre dominicano, desposeído” (108).⁸⁸

While the first chapter of this dissertation examines in detail the enduring quality of historical fiction in Latin American literature, as well as a marked interest in the history of Hispaniola, it is useful here to consider critic Tessa Morris-Suzuki’s conclusion that the historical novel “has become one of the chief vehicles through which the peoples of modern times were encouraged to imagine the past in national terms” (49). In the case of Dominican writer Veloz Maggiolo, however, the Dominican Republic beckons to be addressed not just in “national terms,” but *transnational* terms, taking into account the complex relationship and interweaving of cultures between the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

The narrative of Veloz Maggiolo focuses not just on the figure of Trujillo, but also on those oppressed during the thirty-one year regime. This fictional bestowal of voice to those who did not fit neatly into Trujillo’s vision of a white, Catholic, Spanish nation during the *trujillato* is where the Haitian and Haitian-Dominican subject emerges. Dominican critic Deive confirms Veloz Maggiolo’s focus on those victimized by the Trujillo regime:

Su narrativa reproduce, recreándola, la historia de la República, especialmente la más inmediata y dramática. No es una narrativa de héroes, sino de víctimas, de personajes generalmente marginados y sufrientes, perseguidos por la tiranía o atormentados por un destino incierto y evasivo, derrotados y amargos. (“La pasión por el saber” 67)

⁸⁸ It is important to note, similar to the literary corpus of the authors considered in chapter two, not all of Veloz Maggiolo’s work is considered openly anti-Trujillo. In fact, in the early 1930s he published an article in the dictator’s favor (Gallego Cuiñas 19). Veloz Maggiolo is not the only Dominican writer to praise the dictator during his thirty-one year reign, as censorship during this period made it difficult to publish anything considered remotely “anti-Trujillo.”

While marginalized protagonists who suffered at the hands of the Dominican tyrant found representation in Dominicans of all class, rank, and profession, Veloz Maggiolo opts to include the Haitian subject in his literary reflection of the Trujillo regime and its aftermath. As Rafael Rodríguez-Henríquez confirms in respect to Veloz Maggiolo's interest in fictional characters beyond the Dominican subject: "Su indignación acerca de la identidad dominicana es presentada en sus novelas desde una visión abarcadora de todos los grupos humanos que han contribuido a la misma" (iii). Without question, Haitians have contributed greatly to the agricultural and economic landscape of the Dominican Republic and altered the construction of identity on the eastern side of the island. It is Veloz Maggiolo's all-inclusive vision of Hispaniola and the border region that is of interest in the pages to follow. Both *El hombre del acordeón* and *La vida no tiene nombre* carve a space for Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent in the author's unique re-visioning of Dominican history.⁸⁹ Veloz Maggiolo, perhaps more than any other contemporary Dominican writer, contextualizes and problematizes the (non)-existence of the Dominican-Haitian border. *El hombre de acordeón* is literary proof that despite the existence of a political borderline, any attempt to "filter" culture is irrelevant and what is "Dominican" to one is considered "Haitian" to another. Similarly, *La vida no tiene nombre*, while reflecting on foreign invasions of the Dominican Republic much like Veloz Maggiolo's *De abril en adelante* (1975), situates Dominicans of Haitian descent as integral, patriotic members of the early twentieth century Dominican Republic. Veloz

⁸⁹ *El hombre del acordeón* and *La vida no tiene nombre* do not represent Veloz Maggiolo's only novels with clear visions of the ties between the two countries of Hispaniola. *La biografía de Sombra Castañeda*, for example, is rooted in Haitian-Dominican folkloric tradition and makes reference to both Taíno and African cultures.

Maggiolo's literary approach to the Trujillo era does not merit classification as testimonial literature, but both *El hombre de acordeón* and *La vida no tiene nombre* are realistic accounts of the twentieth century Dominican Republic. Similar to testimonial narrative in which subaltern peoples on the margins of society represent themselves in literary form despite possible linguistic, cultural, and/or political restraints, both texts "concentrate on the debasement suffered by citizens, rather than on the way that it was or could have been overcome" (López-Calvo 113).⁹⁰

In *El hombre del acordeón*, "línea" with a lowercase "l" refers to an overarching understanding of "border" while "Línea," on the other hand, is the specific northern border region of the Dominican Republic (page 32 notes that the capital of La Línea is Montecristi). The novel is set, more specifically, in a town called La Salada, a town within the limits of La Línea. Both la línea and La Línea double as spaces that defy categorization – they are ambiguous, fleeting, transcultural and transnational zones that are difficult to define. To reference Anzaldúa's Nahuatl term, *nepantla*, the Dominican-Haitian borderlands for Veloz Maggiolo is, too, "tierra entre medio" ("(Un)natural bridges" 243).⁹¹ Or rather, the spaces occupied by border inhabitants spread alongside the Massacre River separating the two countries of Hispaniola can be understood as "in-between" spaces. I propose here that while the border region in *El hombre de acordeón*, La Línea, may be the most precise example of a Dominican liminal threshold that is neither "here" nor "there," the same applies for more interior regions of the Dominican

⁹⁰ Two examples of Latin American testimonial narrative are *Biografía de un cimarrón* (Miguel Barnet, 1966) and *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la consciencia* (Elizabeth Burgos, 1985).

⁹¹ *Nepantla* for Anzaldúa, as defined in "(Un)natural bridges, (Un)safe spaces," is used to describe spaces between worlds. It is the physical location that marks the actual crossing itself, where one has crossed point A but is yet to enter point B.

Republic. *La vida no tiene nombre*, for example, is set inland, in El Seibo, the eastern-most province of the Dominican Republic, and does not directly reference a border territory. Veloz Maggiolo, by writing Haitians into this space, clarifies that Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent inhabit this physical space, too. In this way, Veloz Maggiolo's work portrays an alternate representation of Haitians that extends beyond the border where *rayano* culture flourishes and the mixing of religion, food, and music from both Haiti and the Dominican Republic is more prominent. Returning to Anzaldúa's notion of *nepantla* to better understand Veloz Maggiolo's representation of both the physical border region and the ideological borders that exist to differentiate between Dominicans and Haitians in areas beyond the border, Analouise Keating and Gloria González's approach to the idea proves helpful:

During *nepantla*, individual and collective self-conceptions and worldviews are *shattered* as apparently fixed categories – whether based on gender, ethnicity/'race,' sexuality, religion, or some combination of these categories and often others as well – are destabilized and slowly stripped away. (143)

In this chapter I propose that Veloz Maggiolo's literary representation of the Haitian subject likewise serves to "shatter," "strip away," and "destabilize" the dominant discourse related to Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic. His novels, in particular *El hombre del acordeón* and *La vida no tiene nombre*, break with the historical, patriarchal Dominican tradition that traditionally defines Haitians as the barbaric racial and ethnic Other. As noted previously, Veloz Maggiolo is an intellectual who wears many hats. His numerous anthropological articles, for example – all with a central focus on the history and culture of Hispaniola – often contain passages of text that relate directly to his fiction. His 1984 article "Apuntes sobre autoctonía y etnicidad," for example, hints at a basic definition of cultural identity: "Por debajo de la

identidad cultura, en los sustratos de la identificación hombre-paisaje, hombre-tierra, está la organización ideológica” (55). It is precisely the Dominican ideological organization, as related to cultural identity, that Veloz Maggiolo’s novels problematize. Both *El hombre del acordeón* and *La vida no tiene nombre* relay a literary depiction of the Dominican Republic in which national identity is not uniformly opposite of, nor does it reject, Haitian culture. The author’s interest in re-formulating a complex history of Dominicans and Haitians – resisting “the prevailing conception today of a Dominican nation and Dominicaness as being in radical and transhistorical opposition to Haiti and Haitianness” (Lee Turtis 593) – is well documented in *Sobre cultura dominicana...y otras culturas*, a compilation of Veloz Maggiolo’s essays published in 1977. The essay of particular interest here, “Tipología del tema haitiano en la literatura dominicana,” not only signals the importance of Haitians in Dominican letters but also recognizes the diverse, complicated, convoluted representation of the Haitian subject within the literature of the Dominican Republic. While the following pages relate directly to the author’s important essay – an essay Veloz Maggiolo refers to as “el primer intento” to examine the varying representations of Haitianness in Dominican literature (93) – the intent of this chapter is also to problematize any desire to “typify” the representation of a single ethnic group within literature. The analysis of *El hombre del acordeón* and *La vida no tiene nombre* to follow questions Veloz Maggiolo’s five “positions” or representations of the Haitian subject in Dominican literature (prior to 1977 when the “Tipología” essay was published) and rejects the desire to “typify” – a simplification that strips past collaboration between the two countries of its multiple layers – a complex and historically rooted relationship.

“The (Un)delineated Line in *El hombre de acordeón*”

La única línea clara para reconstruir hechos donde lo mágico puede superar a la realidad fue la influencia política que predominó entre los habitantes de la frontera...
Marcio Veloz Maggiolo⁹²

El hombre del acordeón is a literal title for the novel in the sense that the story recalls the life – and more importantly the death – of Honorio Lora, one of General Trujillo’s favorite *merengeros*. Honorio Lora, inhabitant of the border region and individual of legendary musical talent, is “the man of the accordion.” To revisit the moments leading up to the mysterious death of the famed musician is to enter into *rayano* territory and confront the traditions that define the rural border town known as La Salada. While the novel’s setting on the Dominican-Haitian border is essential to the storyline, Veloz Maggiolo’s decision to represent a traditionally marginalized region of the Dominican Republic offers an entryway into the merged cultures of the Haitians and Dominicans straddling the frontier. The transcultural and transnational elements abound – religion, music, and food (to list only a few elements) are commingled on the ambiguous *frontera*, both uniting and separating two countries. Contradictory accounts of the death of Honorio Lora frame the novel in a unique way, and each testimony calls into question a previous “truth.” The parsing of the novel into twenty-one short chapters and the myriad attestations to the life and death of Honorio Lora leads critic De Maeseneer to label the work as closely mirroring a “detective narrative,” with the Massacre as the

⁹² *Acordeón*, 14.

historical backdrop (*Seis ensayos* 35).⁹³ The (nameless) principal narrator is a journalist by profession, and he takes upon himself the task of organizing the multiple testimonies that complicate the mysterious homicide of Honorio. In addition to journalist, he is also a composer who adeptly interprets Honorio's lyrics – read as both precursors and critiques of the 1937 Haitian Massacre and challenges to General Trujillo – and the (temporary) owner of Honorio's magical accordion. Trujillo, however, is referred to as “Brigadier” in the novel, a name change forced upon the narrator who confirms: “inventé nombres y heredades cuando me encargaron, por órdenes del Brigadier, ya presidente, recuperar la historia de los pueblos fronterizos” (14).⁹⁴ Thus confronted with the task of chronicling the border region and addressing its history, the narrator is from the beginning forced to lie, to “invent.”

The analysis of *El hombre del acordeón* to follow begins with a closer look at the novel's setting on the banks of the Massacre River. This geographically engrained vision of the border is followed by an examination of the chaotic, choppy organization of the text before embarking on a tri-part approach to analyzing the representation of the Haitian subject in the novel. This three-pronged analysis highlights: 1) the (un)writing of the border (a line described on page 14 of *El hombre del acordeón* as “no tan delineada”); 2) the notion of rebellion in the text; and 3) the nonexistence or impossibility of “una historia simple.” The same three factors will be considered in the analysis of *La vida no*

⁹³ While the 1937 Massacre of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent is the historical, thematic backdrop of the novel, the geographic one is the Massacre River. The town of La Salada is noted as being nestled on “las orillas del río massacre” (30).

⁹⁴ There is no question that Brigadier is indeed a pseudonym for Trujillo. Not only do biographical facts align – the narrator mentions Brigadier's grandmother was Haitian (14) and notes the date of his death in 1961 (67) for example – but so do the dates of his presidency and involvement with the 1937 Massacre. It also mentions that the middle or second name of Brigadier is Leónidas, just like Rafael *Leónidas* Trujillo.

tiene nombre later in the chapter, connecting the two novels – written nearly a half century apart – and theorizing a common trajectory of Veloz Maggiolo’s treatment of the Haitian subject. Both novels succeed in unifying the two communities that meet at the borderline and proving, much like the ancient vodou belief, that two (different) things can be the same. As Joan Dayan notes: “The history told by these [vodou] traditions defies our notions of *identity* and *contradiction*. A person or thing can be two or more things simultaneously...we begin to see that what becomes more and more vague also becomes more distinct: it may mean *this*, but *that* too” (33). The Dominican-Haitian frontier, much like the vodou belief described by Dayan, is also *this* and *that* – it is both *here* and *there*; its ability to shift beyond physical, political confines makes it the ideal point of departure and return for Veloz Maggiolo’s narrative.

Conceptualizing the setting of the novel – a space where two towns straddling the border fuse into one – is key to re-visiting Anzaldúa’s understanding of *nepantla*. La Línea is an inscrutable space, a physical territory that can be mapped, but not defined, and its bewildering existence aligns with Anzaldúa’s description of *neplanta*: “Neplanta is tierra desconocida, and living in the liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement – an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling. Most of us dwell in nepantla so much of the time it’s becoming a sort of home” (“(Un)natural bridges” 243). In this sense, the Haitian and Dominican inhabitants of La Línea, the rayanos, are also *nepantler@s*. These subjects straddle a borderline that “was not clearly marked” (“no estaba tan delineada,” *Acordeón* 14) and in doing so lose a sense of space. At the same time these “border beings” also create and demarcate their own sense of home that ventures beyond the geographical or political. Being unsure of one’s belonging to a

geographic space can indeed produce, as Anzaldúa asserts, an “alarming feeling,” but it is most alarming for those who are foreigners or outsiders to this “in-between” terrain. It is this very sense of “alarm” or uncertainty that produced fear in the minds of Trujillo (or Brigadier in the novel) and other “white” elites; What Anzaldúa marks as an “alarming feeling” speaks directly to the force behind the 1937 Massacre and its goal to consecrate the frontier. *El hombre del acordeón* is set shortly after the Massacre, but numerous, unabashed recollections of Honorio Lora’s life and death bring the horrific event to the novel’s forefront. The event of the Massacre, then, re-claims and re-purposes the sense of alarm within the border region that for the first part of the twentieth century found a home in the negrophobic, anti-Haitian and anti-Black nationalists. After October 1937, however, Haitian presence on Dominican territory was no longer a matter of everyday practice, a natural and relatively uncontested “come” and “go” atmosphere, but instead cause for “anxiety and fear” (Fumagalli 158). In *El hombre del acordeón*, Veloz Maggiolo normalizes the Haitian-Dominican border experience by giving voice to inhabitants of both sides, allowing for a collaborative detailing of La Línea that is inclusive of both Dominican and Haitian perspectives, confirming that “anxiety and fear” do not control or define the hybrid space for those that live within its limits.

Geographically speaking, a discussion of La Línea – or the fictional town of La Salada – is curious due to the fact the town on the Haitian side of La Salada is referenced in the novel as Ouanaminthe (22). Ouanaminthe, however, is *not* a fictional point; it is the Haitian counterpart of the Dominican town known as Dajabón. If the town name “La Salada” functions as a mask, much like the name “Brigadier,” why is the town name of Ouanaminthe unaltered? While the inclusion of La Salada is another “invention” of the

narrator, the inclusion of an actual geographic location such as Ouanaminthe serves to foil the narrator's attempt to eclipse the exact location of La Salada.

The setting on the Dominican-Haitian border allows for a representation of the Haitian subject to form part of the novel's core, and so does the choppy, fragmented organization of the text and Veloz Maggiolo's utilization of various literary devices. The chaotic ordering and constant shift in narrative voice produces a literary disarray that mimics the border region itself. The first paragraph of *El hombre del acordeón* references this disordered aspect that defines the work: "No se pretende que todo quede tan en orden como debiera ser. Es como hacer una colcha con retazos de diferentes tipos de tela y de colores como las que hacían las abuelas durante los años nebulosos de la infancia" (11). The patchwork metaphor here not only functions as representative of the overlapping testimonies recalling Honorio Lora's death, but also reflects the border itself. Much like Veloz Maggiolo attempts to create a "tipología del haitiano" in Dominican literature in his aforementioned essay, *El hombre del acordeón* points to the (im)possibility of defining – or "typifying" – the Dominican-Haitian border. To "typify" is to attempt to represent or define what is normal, but the border is *not* normative; the border region defies rules, politics, and geography. The *frontera*, then, imposes limits (or has limits imposed upon it), but obeys none. This rebellious nature of the border allows Veloz Maggiolo space to create, space to weave into the *tela*, or patchwork, that represents La Línea – a magical element that adds to its uniqueness. The magic permeating the border zone is defined in the novel as something similar to magical realism: "Cuando las cosas simples tienen la posibilidad de expresarse por sí mismas, se expresan, porque todo tiene

su propia alma y personalidad” (12).⁹⁵ The magic of *la raya* is accentuated by the use of flashbacks. The journalist and primary narrator who selectively presents the testimonies elects for an ordering that convolutes the passing of time, shifting just as easily from past to present as the border inhabitants cross from one country to the other. Valerio-Holguín confirms, “el uso del flash back como recurso de reconstrucción de los hechos, en más de una ocasión, se toman coordenadas temporales distintas para narrar, asimismo es aprehensible el cambio de sujeto narrativo” (“Bolero” 54).⁹⁶

La L/línea “no tan delineada”⁹⁷

While the use of certain literary devices, such as flashbacks, creates a unique timeframe in *El hombre del acordeón*, they also serve to un-write the physical border by weaving together disparate historical moments, in this way revealing the border’s temporary, fleeting nature. The border region, and more specifically Veloz Maggiolo’s fictional town La Salada, succeeds in representing a hybrid zone where Haitian and Dominican cultures blend into one. The word “hybrid,” however, generally implies the formation of something new as the result of combining two (or more) elements. It is helpful to conceive of Hispaniola’s border region as a merging of *two*, and this dual

⁹⁵ See Chapter One for a further discussion of magical realism.

⁹⁶ González-Cruz lists other literary devices commonly employed by Veloz Maggiolo: “Entre los recursos técnicos frecuentemente empleados por Veloz Maggiolo, se pueden citar: la invención de palabras, las enumeraciones intensificadores, los espacios en blanco para sugerir silencios significativos, el entrecruzamiento de planos temporales y del fluir de la conciencia de diferentes personajes, la fragmentación del discurso para traducir con fidelidad procesos de asociación de ideas” (110).

⁹⁷ In the following pages, a reference to both the border itself *and* the fictional town (La Salada or la línea) will be written as “la L/línea.” This dual connotation allows for a broader understanding of “border that also expands to metaphorical understanding of the multiplicity of the frontier.

vision makes it more difficult to erase or delineate the border, as Veloz Maggiolo's novels succeed in doing. Thus, I propose that La Línea, understood as the general "border region" in the novel, expands beyond a hybridized status traditionally described as two parts forming one. Instead, it is a unified, singular, anomalous zone that stands on its own. La Línea's singularity lends itself to a complete erasure of the borderline. La Línea is a community that exists *on* the border, but also *on top of* – or "encima de" – the borderline. The presence and culture of the town overcomes the physical presence of the border. This tendency to avoid focusing on the clash between two groups, ethnicities, and nationalities – here Dominicans and Haitians – is marked also by Nestor García Canclini in his introduction to *Latin America in Translation* in which he advocates for a "move from interpreting the confrontation between *identities* to examining *cultural* processes that either connect or alienate us" (xli). In Veloz Maggiolo's fiction, the *connection* between two cultures is emphasized and key to an alternate representation of the Haitian subject. Foucault highlights a similar hegemonic dualism in his understanding of heterotopic spaces. Conceiving of heterotopic spaces as a way to conceptualize borderlands relates directly to the third principle of Foucault's definition that can be read in relations to a border dichotomy: "The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces" (25). A heterotopic space represents both the smallest parcel of the world, and also the totality of the world. Veloz Maggiolo's La Línea, a fictional border town, is, likewise, seemingly insignificant. La Salada, an apparently ambiguous, unimportant border town, is a small parcel of La Línea, just a speck on Hispaniola's map; yet it is also a point where cultures converge, perhaps one of the locations – albeit fictional – that best represents the totality of the Island. Representative of spaces where

two cultures meet, La Salada and La Línea both function as their own whole(s) in *El hombre del acordeón*.

Veloz Maggiolo, then, “erases” the border, both la línea and La Línea, by enforcing its totality. The prime vehicle for this erasure in *El hombre del acordeón* is music. Obeying no borders, music plays an important role in the novel: “El merengue, la música más importante de la zona, había penetrado igualmente en las galleras haitianas llamándose *meringue*” (17). Make no mistake, “merengue” and “meringue” – linguistic roots aside – are one in the same, a music that penetrates both sides of la L/línea. While Fumagalli notes that merengue is “widely recognized as a quintessential expression of Dominican identity” in her study of *El hombre del acordeón* she also problematizes the origins of the musical genre, noting that one theory claims the genre originated in the Dominican Republic. An alternate theory, however, is that Dominican *merengue* developed from Haitian *meringue*, or *mereng* (153). Regardless of merengue’s origins, in la L/línea, the music masterfully composed by Honorio Lora is appreciated by all. The “Papá Dios del merengue” (19) and the “merengero favorito” (12) of Trujillo, Honorio Lora transforms the merengue into a music that knows no borders. He crafts “un ritmo afrohispano” (20) that pays tribute to two different cultures and simultaneously exemplifies the “unitarian current” that runs through both countries.⁹⁸ Moreover, when Honorio Lora plays with his threesome, page 19 describes the instruments as powerful tools that “definen los límites del tiempo.” While the accordion, guitar (or güira/güiro), and drum succeed in defining the limits of time, they also succeed in blurring notions of

⁹⁸ Dominican poet Pedro Mir, in his “Las dos patrias,” refers to the relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti in this way. His allusion to the “unitarian current” that runs though the island as a whole speaks to a common heritage and history shared by both countries.

time as the novel's chaotic organization – ordered around Honorio Lora's music and the interpretation of his verse – convolutes the past with the present. The same beats and rhythms are heard from both the east and west of the borderline, speaking to the universality of Honorio's art.⁹⁹

Religion, much like music, also serves to defy the borderline in *El hombre del acordeón*. The narrator states openly that the inhabitants of the border, *los rayanos*,¹⁰⁰ “creen en ambas religiones: la de los curas católicas y la que se desarrolla del otro lado de la frontera en donde los dioses tienen otras alternativas y modos de actuar, nombres y poderes diferentes” (84). This particular sentence is significant, as neither religion is given a name. While this anonymity facilitates an approximation to both religions, the description of the second religion – “la que se desarrolla del otro lado de la frontera” – recasts both religions as antagonistic. It is clear, regardless of an evasion to obviate the connection of both religions with one side of the border over the other, the narrator associates himself with the first religion by distancing himself from the second. By

⁹⁹ Music and performance as a crossroads in spaces defined by a physical border has been the subject of study for those interested in the US-Mexico border. See Alejandro L. Madrid's *Transnational Encounters: Music and Performance at the U.S.-Mexico Border* (2011) and Cathy Ragland's *Música Norteña: Mexican Migrants Creating a Nation between Nations* (2009).

¹⁰⁰ It is important to make the distinction between *rayanos* and *fronterizos* in the novel. While the term *rayano* traditionally refers to a border inhabitant, the references in *El hombre del acordeón* mark *rayanos* as biracial and biethnic. Page 17 confirms *rayanos* are a “mezcla mulata de negros y blancos.” While this definition is confusing, as many Dominicans (with no ties to the border region or Haiti) could be considered a “mezcla mulata,” page 62 clarifies that *rayanos*, here, seems to specifically refer to Dominicans of Haitian descent, noting the *rayanos* hid in Haiti after 1937 due to the dangerous atmosphere post Massacre. Another quote points to the *rayanos* dual religion: “...rayanos al fin, creen en ambas religiones” (84). For these reasons, within the context of this novel, *rayano* can be interpreted as a Dominican of Haitian descent or a Haitian living in the Dominican Republic, while *fronterizo* refers to anyone who lives along La Línea, like Honorio Lora.

alluding to the second religion, understood by the reader as vodou, the narrator uses terms such as “otras alternativas y modos de actuar” and “poderes diferentes” to mark the stereotypical Haitian-based religion as the outlier, the foreign, the “Other.” Regardless of a supposed affinity of the narrator for the Catholic religion, Afro-Caribbean culture and vodou play important roles in Veloz Maggiolo’s novel, and it is through a vodou ritual known as a *desunén* that Honorio Lora makes his return as a *lwa*.

The *desunén* is the event that solidifies Honorio’s presence, both physical and spiritual, on the border after his death. The Haitian *bruja* from Ouanaminthe, Polysona Françoise, is charged with performing the *desunén* with the help of her *ti sorcier* or aide, Remigia (a former lover of Honorio). The *desunén*, as described by Remigia, joins the three elements of the deceased – *Go bon angé*, *Ti bon angé*, and *Metet* – resulting in the return of the spirit in *loa* or *lwa* form, able to impact the living and seek revenge for one’s death (85). The *desunén* succeeds in bestowing Honorio with “permanencia como figura del panteón rayano” (81). Notably, the *desunén* took place on Haitian soil, confirming the attachment of *rayanos* and Haitians in Ouanaminthe to Honorio and his song: “El toque de *desunén* es fácilmente captable por los fronterizos, y atrae a los rayanos como si fuera miel llamando a las abejas” (87). In fact, the very first mention of Haiti in the novel coincides with the first mention of the *desunén*, confirming the location where “el hombre del acordeón’s” cadaver was brought back to the living world in “la tierra haitaina” (13). The presence of Haitian magic (practiced by the *bruja volandera* Polysona) and vodou is an allusion by Veloz Maggiolo to the erasure of the Haitian presence in the Dominican Republic, while at the same time a confirmation of the stronghold of Haitian religion in Dominican culture. He states in an interview: “La

influencia haitiana [en la RD], aunque ha sido negada, ha sido muy importante desde el punto de vista de la religiosidad popular, hasta el punto de que [...] existe ya un vudú dominicano muy establecido” (de Maeseener, “Entrevista con” n.p.). Veloz Maggiolo’s admission of an established form of Dominican vodou, also referred to as “The 21 Divisions” or “Los Misterios,” is confirmed by studies such as Carolos Antonio Montenegro’s *The 21 Divisions: Dominican Voodoo* (2009). The *Lwas* central to Dominican vodou, however, differ from those of Haitian vodou and the Dominican tradition is a syncretic blending of various religious practices, including Catholicism, Yoruba religions, and Haitian vodou.

Related to religion is the overarching, existential question concerning the possibility of life after death. This question relates not only to the subsistence of a soul or spirit after death, but also the physical location of the body: Where do we bury our dead? What significance might this final resting place hold? In *El hombre del acordeón* the common tomb, or “tumba común,” known by the name “Vetusto,” is a magical cemetery where the blood of Haitians and Indians mixes beneath the soil. The magic inherent in this cemetery, located in La Salada, is a testament to its ability to withstand drought. According to the narrator, the *tumba común* “se alimentaba de muerte” (40). Perhaps another quality attributed to the space’s ability to persevere, and withstand nature’s attempt to derail it, is the element of racial, ethnic mixture that defines it. While the unique cemetery “había sido primero un lugar de habitación de indios precolombinos y luego un camposanto cristiano de finales del siglo XIX y comienzos del XX” (40), Fray Antón – La Salada’s Catholic Friar – adds that the bones buried in El Vetusto include those of “franceses que dieron origen a la esclavitud de donde surgieron los haitianos”

(41). And, unsurprisingly, in the wake of the 1937 Massacre, Haitians were also put to rest in the “tumba común.” The narrator confirms the presence of Haitian remains: “Ignacia Marsán sabía que los haitianos y los indios se mezclarían en el fondo de las fosas dando como resultado tormentas y momentos duros para el pueblo” (43). Ignacia Marsán, Honorio Lora’s most prominent, long-term lover, in part blames the shared tomb for the town’s constant battles and conflicts. Furthermore, the *tumba común* serves to root the town of La Salada in a cross-cultural, multi-national history. The mass gravesite deconstructs Trujillo’s royal trinity with which he sought to define his countrymen – neither white, nor Catholic, nor Spanish reigns supreme in la L/línea. The space of la L/línea, then, is representative of Nuyorican Tato Laviera’s “Ni de aquí ni de allá,” a negation of a homogenous, singular identity. The Vetusto’s existence, while rejecting Trujillo’s homogenous vision of the Dominican Republic, also questions the existence of “brujas volanderas” who, once on the verge of extinction, also inhabit the cemetery of La Salada.¹⁰¹ Rafael Rodríguez-Henríquez alludes to the anonymity of the El Vetusto: “El nombre del cementerio, no registrado en los sistemas de búsqueda, apunta a la vieja existencia del lugar, con lo que se alude a la mezcla racial, y al origen híbrido que tienen las brujas en la República Dominicana, y en otras culturas” (151). El Vetusto, however, succeeds in emphasizing not only the “origen híbrido” of the Haitian and Dominican brujas, but La Línea in its entirety.

As exemplified in the previous paragraphs, the representation of religion and music in the novel, as well as the organization of the novel itself, addresses the border by highlighting its hybrid character. This success, however, is confounded by the nature of

¹⁰¹ See Fumagalli’s *On the Edge*, page 159 for a more detailed description of the *volanderas*.

the borderline as “no tan delineada,” as the narrator notes on page 14. The more la L/línea is described or summarized, the more it appears to resist or defy categorization. Thus, by writing the border, Veloz Maggiolo *un-writes* the border, speaking to the absence of a fixed division between two countries and instead highlighting the co-existence and interdependency between two cultures. Each border inhabitant is in a sense akin to *El hombre del acordeón* secondary character Julio Flor – “con mujer e hijos en Ouanaminthe y mujer e hijos en La Salada” (22) – as the *rayano*'s ability to belong to both spaces both challenges and emphasizes the understanding of the border as a space traditionally conflictive and oppressive. De Maeseneer describes the “zona liniera” portrayed in *El hombre del acordeón* as “un ambiente de mezcla, de magia, de hibridez, de resistencia al régimen” (118). This description of the border zone of La Salada does not mirror a relation defined by conflict that plays out at the *frontera*, but instead one where an organic harmony arises, where another figure that is neither the Self – in the case of La Línea/La Salada, The Dominican Republic – or the Other – Haiti – emerges. The borderlands, instead, assume a life of their own, exemplifying a hegemonic dualism defined by Eugenio Matibag as a borderlands culture in which cultures do not erase borders but instead multiply them, reduplicating themselves “both on the margins of the national territory but also in the heart of each society” (ix). The introduction to David E. Johnson's and Scott Michaelsen's *Border Theory: The Limits of Cultural Politics* also discusses how borders serve to multiply cultures, commenting on the “identity relationality that makes it seem as if cultures are still to be ‘crossed’” as opposed to an approach to the border that considers the interplay and interdependence between both sides. It is this model – one that uplifts the connections between two communities and

centers on the whole that is the merging of two cultures and societies – that *El hombre del acordeón* offers the reader.

Beyond Lyrics: Rebellion in *El hombre del acordeón*

Examining the notion of rebellion in *El hombre del acordeón* allows for an analysis of the Haitian subject within the novel, as the entire work can be read as a denouncement of the 1937 Massacre. All accounts of the death of Honorio Lora seem to agree that – especially in his final weeks – the *merengero*'s verses “iban contra la autoridad establecida” (60). Overtly challenging the atrocious events of the Massacre that killed thousands of Haitians and Haitians of Dominican descent, Honorio's rebellion re-contextualizes the historically muted genocide and gives voice to the border inhabitants. His confrontation in verse also challenges and critiques the official history and culture concerning the border communities. As Rafael Rodríguez confirms, “la novela propone la reconciliación etnográfica en un plano cultural híbrido, donde imperan las voces marginales/marginadas, lográndose así una pluralidad de voces que a veces se presentan de un modo conflictivo” (75). The plurality of voices at play in *El hombre del acordeón* represents the novel's challenge of authority at the most basic level. Veloz Maggiolo's election to write the Dominican Republic without writing *out* the Haitian presence frames the rebellion the novel posits against the 1937 Massacre and the “lesser-than” treatment of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. González-Cruz alludes more specifically to rebellion as a constant in Veloz Maggiolo's literary corpus.¹⁰² He notes, “Sus primeras

¹⁰² While rebellion is key to *El hombre del acordeón*, it is important to highlight the literary rebellion of Veloz Maggiolo and his Dominican counterparts. Aída Cartagena

novelas...revelan ya el carácter de saludable irreverencia que predominará en todos o casi todos sus cuentos y en las novelas que siguen” (107). In the paragraphs to follow, the rebellion in *El hombre del acordeón* is framed by considering Honorio Lora’s lyrics as the most transparent critique of the Massacre and Trujillo regime, followed by an examination of the underlying confrontation of anti-Haitian ideology in the text.

*A los negros lo mataron
del río Masacre a la vera,
y a la pobre Ma Misién,
a la pobre, quién la viera.
Los dientes de cara ai soi,
sonrisa de mueite entera.
La comadre Ma Misién
se murió de matadera. (35)*

Honorio Lora’s lyrics above of “protesta” and “amargura” (35) in part render Ignacia Marsán’s fateful warning reality. “Hay músicas que matan” (37), she warned him. As Ignacia relays to the narrator, Honorio’s lyrics only strengthened in protest as he continued to address the Massacre with his music, painting the horrific reality of the event that claimed the life of thousands of *rayanos* and Haitians that the *mereguero* considered his friends. Another verse, on page 42, shares that during the Massacre even the weapon of choice – the machete – protested the killings: “que no lo maten poi Dio, son también dominicano.” This verse is particularly revealing in confirming that Honorio Lora, *dominicano*, claims the *rayanos* as his compatriots. Honorio’s link to the *rayano* and Haitian population is not only expressed in these lyrics, but also confirmed by his affinity for *clerén* (a distilled spirit made from low-cost cane sugar in Haiti) and his friendships with those killed in 1937: “[Honorio] había perdido grandes amigos, si se

Portalatin, in a brief anthology *Narradores dominicanos* points to “la rebelión y el sufrimiento moral de la juventud ante las traiciones de los mayores.”

incluye al rayano Tocay, autor de alguna de las letras de sus canciones, y a su mujer Ma Misién” (53). The Ma Misién mentioned here is the same *rayana* Honorio remembers in his (previously cited) lyrics on page 35. The narrator also references other Dominicans who loved “los seres fronterizos y rayanos,” those who found themselves “dolidos por los *hermanos muertos*” (61). The vision of a brotherhood is one Matibag shares in *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint*, approaching Hispaniola as a loosely articulated system in which the two societies are bound together (3). At the same time, it is worthwhile to note that Honorio Lora is not the only accordionist who calls La Línea home. A female accordionist, La Postalita, unlike Honorio, supports Brigadier. The figure of La Postalista – loyal to the regime – strengthens Honorio’s rebellion against it and solidifies his refusal to join the pro-Trujillo chorus. Instead, the *santo merengero* “taps into *merengue*’s history of rebellion against central power: before Trujillo’s appropriation, the accordion-based *merengue* typical of the Cibao area had in fact epitomized the country’s resistance to North American occupation” (Fumagalli 154). In *El hombre del acordeón*, music is a vehicle for resistance. Regardless of Trujillo’s claim that he popularized *merengue* in the Dominican Republic, both in the novel and in Dominican history anti-Trujillo voices surfaced through musical lyrics. Trujillo’s link to the *merengue* tradition is largely due to the fact he censored musical production during his thirty-one year regime and attempted to limit production to his preferred musical taste, namely *merengue* his choice for the “national music” of the Dominican Republic (as opposed to the popular Dominican *bachata*).¹⁰³

¹⁰³ The *bachata* musical genre, considered music of the underprivileged and marginalized populations during the *trujillato*, is also linked to resistance to the Trujillo regime as it

It is clear in the novel that denouncing the Massacre is one and the same with denouncing the Brigadier (read: Trujillo) regime, further accelerated by Honorio's death. One could not challenge the General's actions without challenging the man himself. It is in large part this acknowledgement that validates the "sospecha de que Honorio habría muerto por órdenes del General" (119). Honorio Lora's disapproval of the Massacre, evidenced by the change in his merengue verses in the wake of the event, expands beyond lyrical protest. The magical power of his instrument – metaphorically alluded to numerous times in the novel as a weapon or *fúsil*¹⁰⁴ – and the *desunén* speak more broadly to Honorio's expostulation of the Regime. As the accordion was a gift from Brigadier to his preferred *merengüero*, the instrument's synonymy with a weapon is ironic. The "weapon" gifted to him by Brigadier transforms into the musician's own death wish. The accordion opposes the regime even when the space for resistance is dismantled after the 1937 Massacre. As critic Fumagalli asserts:

The massacre here seems to have therefore succeeded in sealing the frontier, forcing people to embrace fixed nationalities and to discard their affiliation to the complex and variegated world of the *raya*. The novel, however, also shows that there was still space for resistance, as the "illegal" presence of those *rayanos* who were forced to identify themselves with, and to move to, Haiti testified; yet, as one of them puts it, their presence on Dominican territory was no longer a matter for everyday practice but cause for "anxiety and fear." (158)

Honorio Lora and his accordion, then, establish a new space for resistance via a musical genre that reverberates on both sides of the border. While the vision of La Línea offered by the narrator before 1937 is one where goods and resources come and go freely from the Dominican Republic to Haiti and vice-versa, the fear instilled in the border

was "a cultural reaction to his oppressive regime" and "even listening to *bachata* music can be considered a form of resistance to upper-class hegemony" (Reagan 378).

¹⁰⁴ This metaphor is confirmed in the novel: "El acordeón, que era como su arma de guerra" (33).

inhabitants – namely the *rayano* and Haitian populations – after the Massacre temporarily halts this flow of resources. This cannot, however, put an end to Honorio’s lyrical resistance to the regime, intensifying after the Massacre. This musical contestation permits Honorio’s *desunén* on the Haitian side of La Línea in Ouanaminthe; the fact he died for critiquing *el corte* allows him to be treated as a follower of vodou practiced by the Haitian Polysona Françoise and others (85). His music, then, gained the *merengero* an acceptance or welcome that crossed borders. His critique of the Massacre of Haitians and Dominicans of Haitian descent that coalesced in his popular *merengues* drifted over the borderline and positioned Honorio as a voice for those affected by the Massacre on either side of the *raya*.

Aside from specific examples of Honorio’s lyrics acting in protest of the 1937 Massacre and General Brigadier’s ethnic cleansing, *El hombre del acordeón* can also be read as a general rebellion against the identification of Haitians as the Other in the Dominican Republic. While the work does not fit the categorization of a historical novel and the characters and the town of La Salada are fictional, Veloz Maggiolo’s recreation of La Línea reveals the hybridity of the borderlands. By novelizing the protest of Honorio Lora and his will to stand “contra la autoridad establecida” (61) an alternate, fictional version of historical events results. *El hombre del acordeón* would be interpreted by Trouillot, for example, as a narrative that “go[es] back and forth over the line between fiction and history” (8). Veloz Maggiolo’s novel exemplifies the susceptibility of history to invention, and the entire text toys with the notion of credibility or veracity. Vetemit Alzaga, the father of the narrator and one of his many informants is identified as a “cuentero de pura fibra” (13). Vetemit refers to Honorio Lora’s death and rebirth(s) as

“parte de las historias verdaderas que ahora se quieren negar” (12). The novel’s insistence on a negation of the truth, or “history” as understood by some, connects to Trouillot’s recognition of “the need to impose a test of credibility on certain events and narratives because it matters *to them* whether these events are true or false, whether these stories are fact or fiction” (11). If one understands Trouillot’s cautionary understanding of credibility within the context of *El hombre del acordeón* (including his notion of a “collective past”), a new understanding of La Salada or La Línea as a hybrid space emerges. The differences between “fronterizos” and “rayanos” are blurred, and a negation of either or both classifications for anyone (Dominican, Haitian, or otherwise) inhabiting the borderline proves difficult.

(The impossibility of) “una historia simple”

Related to the underlying theme of credibility and the possibility of a “truthful” or “accurate” record of past events in *El hombre del acordeón* is the (in)existence of “una historia simple.” This exact phrasing is used on page 83 of the novel when the narrator attempts to describe the questionable burial of Honorio Lora: “Honorio Lora fue traído, velado en la iglesia de fray Antón y enterrado con su instrumento. *Una historia simple*” (my emphasis). Directly following the narrator’s use of this phrase to describe Honorio’s afterlife as “simple” and uncomplicated is an allusion to the contradictory versions, or “versiones contradictorias” (83), concerning the *merengero*’s burial. Thus, this preemptive allusion to “una historia simple” is immediately undercut, even mocked. The narrator’s self-identification as an untrustworthy inventor adds to the multiple layers of “truth” in the narration of Honorio’s (after)life and the possibility for any narration of La

Línea to be “simple” is also contested through the discussion surrounding identity that permeates the entire novel, exemplified by the Hispanicizing of French/Haitian last names.

Not only does the narrator categorize others, such as his father Vetemit Alzaga, as inventors and falsifiers of truth, but he also recognizes his own affinity for invention. Although he praises his good memory even into his old age, he admits that it wavers, “parpadeando a veces” (14). His confession of an imperfect memory is followed by his self-classification as “un cuentero.” This identification is particularly significant, while also ambiguous, as “cuentero” in Spanish refers to both a storyteller *and* a gossip, or even liar. Although he classifies himself as “cuentero,” the narrator seems to chart a distinction between his own identification as “storyteller” (if one chooses to interpret the word “cuentero” in this way) and Vetemit Alzaga who, as mentioned previously, “era cuentero de *pura fibra*” (my emphasis). The description of Vetemit as “cuentero” is repeated numerous times in the novel, almost always with a negative, uneasy connotation, making the reader wary of the veracity of Vetemit’s border accounts.¹⁰⁵ As the narrator reiterates his father’s description of Honorio in his youth he adds words of warning: “No vayan a creerlo todo de un cuentero” (24). The narrator himself, on the other hand, leads the reader to believe that he only invents when necessary, for example when ordered by Brigadier to “recuperar la historia de los pueblo fronterizos” (14). Regardless of the reason behind the narrator’s “inventions,” the *cuentero* classification can also be read as a strategy to mitigate Brigadier’s (Trujillo’s) vengeance, similar to

¹⁰⁵ Page 67, for example, marks Vetemit as “cuentero de profesión.” This characterization, in part, appears generational, as Vetemit’s own father is also categorized in this way – an “informe” written by Alzaga mentions the death of his father “por bandolero y charlatán” (70).

Freddy Prestol Castillo's decision to label *El masacre se pasa a pie* as fiction and not a testimony based on true events. Another noteworthy emphasis on the relation between memory and the passage of time, the narrator again employs the term "cuentero" on page 25: "De modo que, cuentero o no, oficio en decadencia, mi parecer es que lo que aquí narro *alcance* veracidad, porque, si tengo culpas, debo señalar que 'culpas son del tiempo y no de quien narra'" (25; my emphasis). Confirming the irony of a "truth within reach" – (Is it a truth at all?) – and the narrator's self-doubt concerning his storytelling tendencies – "cuentero o no" – this quote attempts to apologize preemptively for any liberties taken by the first-person narrator. It instead places the blame on the lapse of memory associated with age and temporal distance. Regardless of the verdict regarding the narrator's identification as "cuentero," of interest here is the fact it is only Dominicans who are scrutinized for their tendency to lie or bend the truth. Vetemit, for the narrator, is clearly portrayed as untrustworthy (as both father figure and community member). In a sense, from an ethnic/racial standpoint, the tables are turned. At no point in the novel are the Haitians or *rayanos* cast as "cuenteros," or liars, an otherwise stereotypical categorization of these populations from the Dominican perspective. *El hombre del acordeón* alternatively presents Haitians and *rayanos*, populations gravely affected by the 1937 Massacre, as innocent victims forced to flee the Dominican Republic for Haiti, a country that many had never considered home. A closer look at the characterization of Dominicans versus Haitians/*rayanos* in the novel materializes when considering the ways in which identity is addressed in the text.

"La gente había encontrado eso que ahora llaman <la identidad>, una cosa que se puede inventar y dar personalidad a quien no la tiene" (92). This line from the novel

frames the representation of identity and marks identity as flexible and influenced by those in dominant positions in society. In *El hombre del acordeón* it is Brigadier who controls Dominican identity and who erases, forcing the narrator in his role as “historiador oficial” to erase as well, “negro” or “negra” as a possible racial classification for Dominicans. Following Brigadier’s orders, the narrator confirms:

En el documento de identidad personal y los carnés del Partido aparecía <indio> en vez de negro, o bien <indio oscuro>, o <indio lavado>, usándose el término <trigueño>, o sea del color del trigo, para mulatos claros y el de <moreno> para los negros de verdad. (93)

These state-sanctioned identities are also referenced in Kimberly Eison Simmons’ *Reconstructing Racial Identity and the African Past in the Dominican Republic* when she confirms the term “indio” was institutionalized by Trujillo as a “non-black, mixed, race/color category” (29) intended to differentiate Dominicans from Haitians, defined on the census or *cédula* as “black.” The novel itself is proof such imposed identities – negating the black elements in Dominican society – do not have a stronghold in La Línea. Honorio himself, at the center of the novel, is the champion of hybrid identity. His third and final burial converts him into a being that is half Christian and half vodou. Although these descriptors refer to religion as opposed to race or ethnicity, the notion of blending is key. More specifically, the mixing of Haitian and Dominican is best exemplified in *El hombre del acordeón* by the last names or *apellidos* of residents of La Salada. To no surprise, Vetemit is charged by his son with holding a leading role in the name shifting that served to falsify the origins of La Salada residents: “cambia los apellidos haitianos de los habitantes de La Línea por nombres españoles, a petición de Trujillo...en la novela puesto que aquí el dictador y su política quedan irónicamente ridiculizados” (67). While outwardly a supporter of Brigadier and his regime, chronicling

the border region to his liking by writing out the black presence, Vetemit also makes reference to the black *Dominicans* that died during the Massacre, shouting out to those yielding machetes: “we, too, are Dominican” (42). This name changing – or confounding of the national roots of a given last name – reaches to Brigadier himself, as he attempted to convince others “el apellido ancestral de su abuela era español, puesto que Chevalier en francés significa <caballero> en lengua de Castilla” (57). Honorio, as protestor of the Regime, criticizes the purposeful name changes in song:

*Juanita la loca
cambio de apellido,
pero nunca pudo
cambiar de vestido. (73)¹⁰⁶*

To return to the subtle mockery in the novel of Honorio’s (life and) death – or the history of La l/Línea at large – as “simple,” Jean-Price Mars’ use of the term “double attitude” to describe the Dominican-Haitian relation proves relevant. The term attempts to address how Dominicans contradicted and convoluted the simplistic binary (Dominicans as *non-Haitian*) and created a complex situation in which Dominicans opposed other Dominicans and Haitians opposed other Haitians. In this way, a “parallelism of this double attitude” resulted, as “those of one country who held a stake in dealings between the two nations articulated and acted upon beliefs and convictions that ran counter to those of others of the same country” (Matibag 11). The relation between Dominicans, Haitians, and the “in-betweens” (or *rayanos*) in the border region further complicates the existence of a “double attitude.” While any relationship with layers is difficult to peel back or conceptualize, in La Salada, for example, the crossings (of which Honorio’s

¹⁰⁶ These lyrics tell a story of conflict between Honorio Lora and Enemesio Osorio; their conflict highlights the Island’s historical dispute between France and Spain (Fumagalli 156).

friend, Tocay with families on both sides of the border is a good example), cover-ups, and name changes only further confuse the relationship.

Veloz Maggiolo affirms that for the purpose of his essay “Tipología del tema haitiano” he is primarily interested in analyzing narrative that posits “como tema *central* el hombre de Haití” (94). *El hombre del acordeón*, instead, places at the center of the narrative not exclusively the Haitian subject, but instead a Dominican man and *fronterizo* whose life is tied directly to Haiti and the borderlands, or La Línea. Veloz Maggiolo’s requirements for what constitutes as “Haitian narrative” aside, the 2003 novel can indeed be categorized by the parameters identified by the author himself in his “Tipología.” The Haitian subject in *El hombre del acordeón*, then, can be read as both the “haitiano compadecido” and “el haitiano integrado.” As the essay was written decades before the novel was published, no classification of the work is included. Veloz Maggiolo does, however, mention *La vida no tiene nombre* as an example of the “integrated Haitian,” a distinction problematized in the pages to follow. In reference to *El hombre del acordeón*, the “Tipología” can be read as a precursor to the novel’s denouncement of the 1937 Massacre and the author’s will to address the genocide. In the essay, Veloz Maggiolo points to a historical pattern of neglecting the event: “La matanza de haitianos del 1937 no fue difundida ni por la prensa dominicana ni por medios de comunicación relacionados con el país” (108). *El hombre del acordeón* represents the author’s attempt to avenge the silencing of this genocide, and the novel both searches for and convolutes “distintas verdades” (De Maeseneer, *Encuentros* 113) in relation not only to Honorio’s mysterious death, but also to a one-sided Dominican history. While the novel exposes “la mentira de la historia” (114), it also speaks to the border crossing of more than human

bodies – Honorio Lora’s music as a significant social motivator that carries over the border line, consecrating a beyond-wordly significance of the “santo merengero’s” instrument:

El acordeón es una herramienta narrativa que servirá para abordar el asunto histórico relacionado con Trujillo, por lo inclusivo se narra la historia del instrumento en el país, también se relatan, insistentemente, las circunstancias que atañen el robo y rescate del mismo, hasta el final de la obra, donde el instrumento, al adquirir una dimensión mágica, se depura de su valor práctico para sí alcanzar una significación más simbólica. (Rodríguez-Henríquez 126)

This symbolic significance relates to the hyper-hybrid characteristic of *La L/línea*, envisioning Hispaniola and *rayanos* and *fronterizos* as part of a whole, avoiding a traditional focus on two halves or “unequal” parts.

La vida no tiene nombre: “novela de ocupaciones”

La vida no tiene nombre, upon considering Veloz Maggiolo’s impressive, decade-spanning literary corpus, represents a work of paramount importance for the author, as its release in 1965, shortly after Trujillo’s assassination, constitutes his first novel pertaining to the Latin American literary Boom movement of the sixties.¹⁰⁷ The work, however, is not only worthy of recognition as Veloz Maggiolo’s first literary publication deemed explorative and with numerous hallmarks of Boom novels such as a nonlinear organization and multiple narrative perspectives, but also as a novel with a marked interest in the Haitian subject, with a young Dominican-Haitian man as the first person narrator and protagonist. The coupling of the novel’s classification as Veloz Maggiolo’s

¹⁰⁷ Veloz Maggiolo’s publication following *La vida no tiene nombre*, *Los ángeles de hueso* (1975), is more commonly regarded as a post-Boom novel. See Bruno Rosario Candelier’s article: “Marcio Veloz Maggiolo: *La vida no tiene nombre*.”

first text identifiable as Boom narrative (only his second novel, following *El buen ladrón* (1961))¹⁰⁸ and its notable representation of the Haitian subject is not coincidental; both factors serve as an introduction to the portrayal of the *lo haitiano* in the Dominican Republic that is a constant in Veloz Maggiolo's narrative. Another constant in Veloz Maggiolo's literature is an interest, even obsession, with history. In the case of *La vida no tiene nombre*, an approach to history requires a two-part analysis; the 1916 US Marine Occupation in the Dominican Republic serves as the work's historical backdrop and the novel's publication in 1965 came just a few short months before a second invasion by the US Marines. The work's subtitle, then, "novela de la ocupación," has dual meaning, as it directly reflects not one, but two Occupations. This subtitle, as I justify in the paragraphs to follow and as reflected in my own subheading on the previous page, would make more sense with a minute modification: "novela de *ocupaciones*."

La vida no tiene nombre is set in 1916, during the beginning of the eight-year US Marine Occupation that lasted until 1924.¹⁰⁹ With the official proclamation by the US Military government that the Dominican Republic was "in a state of military occupation" by the forces under the command of Captain Henry S. Knapp, Dominican sovereignty collapsed (Moya Pons, *The Dominican Republic* 320). Dominican hostility and resistance toward the Occupation plagued the United States' eight-year presence in the country. Referred to in *La vida no tiene nombre* as "revoluciones montoneras" (88), pressure from Dominican rebels required unplanned monetary investment in the invasion and forced the

¹⁰⁸ Veloz Maggiolo's first literary publication was a *poemario* titled *El sol y las cosas* (1957).

¹⁰⁹ Other novels that position the 1916 US invasion as historical framework include Nelly Rosario's *Song of the Water Saints*. This Latino/a text reveals a generational female storyline, in which the first-generation character, Graciela, comes of age during the first US Occupation in Santo Domingo.

National Guard – or “La Guardia Nacional” – to respond. The National Guard is defined in the novel as “una milicia que los Americanos han inventado, con la cual persiguen a los dominicanos que andan alzado por los campos” (6). The *guerilla* rebellion against the United States’ armed intervention is the primary concern of Veloz Maggiolo’s brief historical novel examined in the pages to follow.¹¹⁰ This historical positioning of the novel, and the protagonism of a Haitian-Dominican who identifies as a revolutionary rebelling against the US Marine presence, roots the novel in a complicated, transnational political history and likens the text to Seymour Menton’s definition of “novela histórica,” discussed in Chapter One. Menton defines the literary subgenre in the following way: “...hay que reservar la categoría de novela histórica para aquellas novelas cuya acción se ubica total o por lo menos predominantemente en el pasado, es decir, un pasado no experimentado directamente por su autor” (32). *La vida no tiene nombre* portrays, from a fictional perspective, the plight of a Dominican-Haitian rebel – a “Dominican” patriot who falls victim to racial discrimination and social injustices – and in doing so also emphasizes the fundamental role memory places in Veloz Maggiolo’s narrative. Rafael Rodríguez-Henríquez, in *Fuentes de la imaginación histórica* – one of the first critical studies dedicated solely to the literary production of Veloz Maggiolo – refers to the intersections of fiction and history in Veloz Maggiolo’s work as “memoria imaginativa.” This “imagined memory,” helps to fill historical voids – especially when related to experiences of marginalized subjects like the Haitian-Dominican, Ramón – and also answers, at least partially, to magical elements in *La vida no tiene nombre* classified as “beyond this world.” While Veloz Maggiolo’s later novels, including *El hombre del*

¹¹⁰ For more on the 1916-24 US Military Occupation, see Frank Moya Pons *The Dominican Republic: A National History*, pages 321-39.

acordeón, contain elements of what can be considered magical realism or *lo real maravilloso*, *La vida no tiene nombre* merits recognition from critic González-Cruz as absurd and akin, for example, to Carpentier's "marvelous realism" for other reasons:

...quizá la [novela] que mejor trata el tema socio-político dentro del marco del absurdo. Porque aquí Veloz Maggiolo no tiene que valerse de la fantasía para su ficción novelesca: el absurdo lo constituye la existencia de cada día en la República Dominicana. La trama ocurre alrededor de 1912: colonialismo americano, ausencia de libertad, intrigas políticas, etc. (113).

The novel's title emphasizes this absurdity, speaking to the utter waywardness of life. Or, rather, fiction does not need to be invented because life is absurd. The protagonist and narrator of *La vida no tiene nombre*, Ramón, is a perfect example of a fictional character trapped in an absurd reality, unable to detach himself from a historical period of national chaos and confusion, victim of his race and class. Ramón, son of a Haitian servant raped by her "white" Dominican master, enlists himself as part of the revolutionary troops under the command of Dominican General Matías Remigio. Ramón's Dominican father and brother, however, align themselves with the lucrative outside forces, supporting the invasion and, according to Ramón, betraying the Dominican nation. Narrated from a jail cell awaiting while execution – a fact revealed in the first few pages of the novel: "estoy preso por los delitos..." (7) – Ramón details his attempted evasion of the National Guard and eventual capture. Ramón, unknowingly, succumbs to his brother's plot to murder his father, a plot that leaves the (Dominican) brother as sole inheritor of the father's fortune. While the narration describes Ramón's life, nicknamed "El Cuerno,"¹¹¹ during the rebel fight and addresses his decision to join the revolutionary cause, it also reveals a distinctive historical, social, economic, and political background.

¹¹¹ "El Cuerno," here, refers to Ramón's "illegitimate child" status. He is "un hijo del cuerno," a Dominican-Haitian born of an act of sexual assault and infidelity.

The second invasion of the US Marines is reflected in the moment of publication of *La vida no tiene nombre*, as 1965 marks the year Juan Bosch's socialist politics, and his *Partido Revolucionario Dominicano* (PRD), which failed to unite the country, oppressing the opposition. Bosch's brief presidency, from February 27, 1963 to September 25, 1963, was made possible by Trujillo's assassination and was initially considered by many as the harbinger of a hopeful future for the country. In light of several constitutional changes instated by Bosch, largely related to limits of landownership and improved workers' rights, he was forced out of office by military officers during the Trujillo regime and fled to exile in Puerto Rico. In response to the political pandemonium that ensued following Bosch's forced exile, on April 28, 1965 US military troops landed again on Dominican soil, this time to offer support for the neo-trujilloist (anti-Bosch) political forces. This second occupation, in which a physical US presence did not last through the end of the year, had a strong hand in negotiations between the two Dominican governments during the time, the *gobierno constitucionalista* and the *gobierno de reconstrucción nacional* (the two opposing forces in the short-lived civil war). After a mere four months, the civil war ended, and in August of the same year, the Dominican Republic formed a new government. The US occupational troops remained on the Island until free elections were held and a new constitutional government came to power. Unsurprisingly, given his support from the Trujilloist army officers, Joaquín Balaguer and his *Partido Reformista* prevailed, forcing Bosch back into exile, this time in Spain (Moya Pons *The Dominican Republic*). *La vida no tiene nombre*, published for the first time in February of 1965, preceded the start of this second military

intervention by only two months – a time offering a renewed sense of political freedom and societal optimism, but also of increasingly conflictive politics.¹¹²

The novel's publication shortly before the second US invasion is noteworthy, but so is the aforementioned newly liberated literary climate in the sixties in the Dominican Republic, following the assassination of Trujillo in 1961. Critic Soledad Álvarez describes the changes in intellectual movement in the country post-1961:

El tornado político removió todos los cimientos de la vida y la sociedad dominicana. Y en la euforia no sólo fueron derribados los símbolos visibles de la era. Con la retórica y el arsenal ideológico que imponían los nuevos tiempos, los intelectuales y escritores jóvenes se plantearon, un tanto a ciegas, la tarea desmesurada para sus fuerzas de remover los cimientos de la cultura elitista, autoritaria y excluyente sobre la cual se había montado el sistema de significación trujillista. (96)

Veloz Maggiolo's literary publications during the decade immediately following Trujillo's assassination include *El buen ladrón* (1961), *La vida no tiene nombre*, *Nosotros los suicidos* (1965), and *Los ángeles de hueso* (1967). The end of the Trujillo regime elicited a response from the intellectual community, and Veloz Maggiolo's novels serve as condemnation of the Trujillo era. Many of the young intellectuals, publishing alongside Veloz Maggiolo during this crucial historical moment, belonged to the generation of 48 – or *los del 48* – and attended the *tertulia* La Bombonera (en el Jai Alai and in la Cafetera) (S. Álvarez 95). Critic Fiallo Billini describes the passionate response and mobilization of the Dominican society after 1961: "...decapitada la tiranía, tiene lugar en la República Dominicana una crisis de hegemonía...que causa inmediatamente la movilización de la sociedad civil" (n.p.).

¹¹² See José Antonio Fiallo Billini "La revolución de abril: el ayer para el hoy para el mañana" for more on the Revolution of 1965.

All four of Veloz Maggiolo's novels published in the 1960s arguably classify as "Trujillo narratives" and this historical thematic with a direct link to Trujillo (in *La vida no tiene nombre*, for example, Trujillo appears as a trainee of the US Marines) for this time frame is not unique, although the inclusion of a Dominican-Haitian narrator and protagonist veered from the norm. Other novels published around 1965 include, but are not limited to: *Así mataron a Trujillo* (1965) de Rafael Meyreles Soler, *Trujillo: anatomía de un dictador* (1967) de Arturo Espaillat, and *Quiénes y por qué eliminaron a Trujillo* (1975) by Eduardo Matos Díaz. These novels' titles are not only reflective of an interest in a narrative depiction of or a contestation to the Trujillo regime, but also demonstrate an overall increase in publications in the immediate wake of the *trujillato*. Gallego Cuiñas recognizes both trends during this specific time frame: "el número de novelas se incrementa y adquiere un mayor protagonismo el trujillato" (135).¹¹³ While *La vida no tiene nombre* merits the classification as "narrativa trujillista" for its interest in the figure of Trujillo, albeit a characterization of the dictator prior to his 1930 rise to presidency, that focus is not the principal one. More than a Trujillo narrative, Veloz Maggiolo's 1965 novel is perhaps a "(Dominican)-Haitian narrative," detailing the struggle of a Dominican of Haitian descent during the 1916-24 Occupation. The following pages, via the same tri-part analysis used to critically approach *El hombre del acordeón*, consider: 1) the ways in which *La vida no tiene nombre* (un)writes the border by (dis)placing the Haitian subject off the borderline itself; 2) the theme of rebellion in

¹¹³ The following quote also points to the necessity of re-evaluating history after the fall of Trujillo: "el análisis sociopolítico y la reevaluación histórica era una necesidad después de la caída del régimen que había conseguido hacer tergiversar la historia a conveniencia de su propia práctica política" (Alcánta Almánzar 73).

the text; and, 3) how the selection of Ramón as protagonist-narrator complicates Dominican identity.

On/Off the Border: El Seibo¹¹⁴

In contrast to *El hombre del acordeón* and other novels considered in previous chapters such as *El masacre se pasa a pie*, here the Haitian subject is not embedded within the physical space of the border. While *La vida no tiene nombre* is not set on “La Línea,” the cultural, racial, and ethnic signifiers that traditionally define *la frontera* and the border inhabitants follow the protagonist into the eastern region of the Dominican Republic. The Dominican-Haitian Ramón Vieth’s protagonism in *La vida no tiene nombre* recontextualizes where a *nepantlera*, to utilize Anzaldúa’s terminology, can dwell (and still be considered “nepantlera”). While Anzaldúa’s definition of *nepantla* cited earlier – “Neplanta is tierra desconocida, and living in the liminal zone means being in a constant state of displacement – an uncomfortable, even alarming feeling. Most of us dwell in nepantla so much of the time it’s becoming a sort of home” (“(Un)natural bridges” 243) – *nepantleras* refers to individuals positioned *between* worlds, belonging nowhere. While the “off-border” spaces are not traditionally characterized as “liminal zones,” ideologically speaking, this uncomfortable or alarming feeling exists for Ramón, too. The setting of *La vida no tiene nombre* is rural, and the first sentence of the novel

¹¹⁴ While the Seibo region was the site of some sugar plantations in the early 1900s, it is traditionally known for its cattle farms, a tradition that continues today. Ramón describes the region in this way: “La tierra donde vivíamos, muy cerca de El Seibo, estaba dedicado al ganado, porque a mi papa le gustaba eso de la ganadería y vivía metido entre los potreros y las vacas...” (13).

grounds the text in the importance of land and the sugar industry: “Las tierras del este son pródigas en caña de azúcar y yerba para el ganado” (5). This rural setting, unsurprisingly, is tied to prominent traits of the naturalist movement, and the author’s utilization of comparative phrases abound, including, for example, the description of Ramón’s father’s face as “arrugado y amarillo como panal de abejas” and the clouds in the afternoon: “Las nubes ruedan por el aire como pelotas de lodo” (13).¹¹⁵

Veloz Maggiolo’s purposeful setting of the novel in the eastern region of the Dominican Republic, more specifically El Seibo,¹¹⁶ is not only reflective of his desire to frame the narrative around a typical Dominican landowner and his offspring, but also of his interest in expanding the space Haitians traditionally inhabit in Dominican literature. The second sentence of the novel re-focuses the primary interest of the narrative, moving from the land itself to the hands that work the land: “Son tierras donde los hombres no tenemos ni siquiera precio; donde los hombres trabajamos como animales, de sol a sol, por unos cuantos centavos americanos” (5). This quote speaks to the absurdity of life itself and the inconsequential status of minorities and non-elites in Dominican society at the turn of the twentieth century and this “off-border” setting allows for a more pointed, nuanced narrative depiction of the Haitian subject. This alternate space, as García Canclini suggests, allows the focus of the text to “move from interpreting the confrontation between *identities* to examining the *cultural* processes that either connect

¹¹⁵ For more examples of such comparisons, born of the naturalist tradition, see Bruno Rosario Candelier’s “Marcio Veloz Maggiolo: *La vida no tiene nombre*,” page 94.

¹¹⁶ To clarify, El Seibo, is a province in the eastern-most region of the Dominican Republic. Also spelled “El Seybo,” the province is not to be confused with the macro region in the Dominican Republic, El Cibao (also known for cattle). El Seibo is the second-most Eastern province in the Dominican Republic, to its east is the larger La Alta Gracia.

or alienate *us*” (*Hybrid* xli; my emphasis). While the “us” in this quotation is ambiguous, in this context it likely refers to the people of Hispaniola. What connects the people of Hispaniola? Does this “off border” setting allow for a space where notions of citizenship or identity are more malleable? What does it mean to be culturally and/or socially marked as Haitian (Dominican) in this space? Ramón, while recognizing his mother’s Haitianess, identifies as a proud Dominican:

Yo llevaba en mi alma el deseo profundo de demostrarle a los Vieth (así se apellidaban mi padre a sus hijos) que era más dominicano que ellos, que sentía mucho más que ellos amor por esta tierra que tanta traición ha engendrado en los últimos años; por eso, un buen día me enrolé en las tropas alzadas del general Matías Remigio...(26).

Not only does Ramón boast of his own Dominicaness, but he takes it a step further by claiming he is *more* Dominican than his half siblings, children of a woman “más blanca que Simían,” Ramón’s Haitian mother (19). Written over a half decade before the 2013 Ruling, the connections between the novel and the recent Dominican citizenship-stripping sentence are plentiful. In 2013, Dominicans of Haitian descent in the Dominican Republic are, too, making transparent their “love for (and connection to) the Dominican Republic.” Just like Ramón, it is the country in which they were born, whose language they speak, and whose cultures and customs alone they know.

Ramón, unlike most “cuerno” or bastard children, was given the last name of his father. The protagonist-narrator confirms: “Parece que un día papá, en una de esas borracheras indecentes, decidió, para mortificar a sus hijos blancos, darme su apellido, un apellido que debería llevar legalmente, pero que no utilice más que en los casos necesarios” (19). While this last name provides Ramón flexibility in certain social situations – the protagonist using it in “casos necesarios” – the last name “Vieth” is

notably non-Dominican. Ramón confirms his father's origin: "Sin embargo mi padre no era dominicano, era de un país muy lejano que se llama Holanda, pero tenía muchos años en Santo Domingo (19)." Thus, Ramón's father, just like his mother Simián, is *not* a native of the Dominican Republic, but has lived and worked in the country for years; Simián, on the other hand, is a recent Haitian migrant to the Dominican Republic. Veloz Maggiolo's election to use this last name, instead of a more establish Dominican surname Spanish in origin speaks to the transnational, international scope of the Seibo province and the Dominican Republic at large, in this way creating a beyond-borders community that reaches not only to Haiti, but spans international borders (such as Holland).¹¹⁷ Ramón's mother, Simián,¹¹⁸ cast as an outsider (a "non-Dominican"), is only more of an "outsider" geographically positioned in the eastern region of the Dominican Republic: "Mi mamá, que tal vez ya ha muerto, proviene de lejos, casi del extremo oeste de la isla, desde una lejana aldea situada en algún rincón de Haiti" (19). Ramón's unfamiliarity with Haiti is apparent here. He does not know where his mother is from, only that it is far away, on the far western side of the Island. This allusion to the "far western side" suggests Simián travelled the island of Hispaniola from one extreme to the other, from the furthest western point to the eastern limit, "hasta llegar a los lados de El Seibo, débil y violada varias veces por los campesinos de al parte sur" (19).

¹¹⁷ There are also significant populations of both Japanese and Jewish in the Dominican Republic. These groups arrived as legal immigrants to the country during the *trujillato* as a direct result of Trujillo's plan to "whiten" the country.

¹¹⁸ Ramón first introduces his mother in his testimony as "aquella haitiana llamada Simián...mi madre fue sirvienta de la casa durante mucho tiempo" (19). Ramón notes that her biggest "sins" were "el haberme parido y el ser haitiana" (25).

La vida no tiene nombre also contains, at times, a typical characterization of the Haitian subject. This includes, for example, the traditional primitivist discourse. Critic Fernando Valerio Holguín outlines how Dominican culture defends its Spanish and Taíno descendancy, at the same time disowning its African origins, in his essay “Nuestros vecinos, los primitivos: identidad cultural dominicana.” “El discurso primitivista con respecto a los haitianos ha perfilado la identidad dominicana racial y culturalmente” (n.p.). The binary oppositions construed in popular Dominican thought cast Haitians as primitive, animalistic, and unruly, and Ramón, despite his last name, is unable to escape the characterization as the “Otro-vecino.” When the narrator-protagonist is called “maldito haitiano” by his father, however, the harsh words do not affect him:

Decía que yo era haitiano como si eso fuera un insulto, a mí siempre que me lo dijo me daba por pensar que si él consideraba a mi mamá un animal por hecho de ser haitiana, él, papá, debía ser un animal peor y hasta más insignificante que mamá puesto que se ayuntó con ella cuantas veces le dio la gana, y seguramente que al hacerlo no sintió ni el asco ni la conmiseración que a veces aparentaba para los negros. (22)

Not only does Ramón refuse to consider his Haitianness as an embarrassment, or accept the racial/ethnic tag as insult, but he flips the primitivist-based insult on his father. Señor Vieth, “un animal peor y hasta más insignificante que mamá (22),” is depicted by his son as the backwards, wild savage who is unable to control his sexuality or his temper. The *hacendado* “father-figure” is also ridiculed for his wavering treatment of Haitians; when he sexually harasses Simián, he appears undisgusted by the Haitian body, and Ramón confirms his father sometimes felt or demonstrated commiseration toward the predicament of Haitians (22). Ramón is willing to criticize his deceased Dominican father from the ironic safety of his jail cell, admitting that when his father died he no longer felt imprisoned by his unwavering power, instead professing, “sentí una alegría” (77).

Los dos padres-villanos: Ramón's Two-part Rebellion

Unsurprisingly, Trujillo narratives traditionally cast the *Generalísimo* himself as the novel's villain. *La vida no tiene nombre*, on the other hand, while it can be categorized as “narrativa trujillista” for its overarching interest in the figure and his prominent role as a promising, young, US trained Dominican during the first Occupation, places Trujillo as a “background villain.”¹¹⁹ Or rather, he is presented as a piece or fragment of the foreign military force and, more specifically, the US-trained *Guardia Nacional*. The United States and the US Marine forces are presented by Ramón in the first pages of the novel as the obvious enemy, describing the *gringo* troops as “...de un país que se llama <Los Estados Unidos.> Un país que a pesar de su nombre no quiere unirse a nosotros y ayudarnos, sino darnos mal trato y mala vida” (7). Ramón's enlistment alongside the Dominican rebel forces confirms his rebellion against the *Guardia Nacional* and the United States Marine Occupation. This rebellion – which also includes a representation of the national father-figure and future “padre de la nación” – and Ramón's unwillingness to succumb to outside forces is coupled with his rebellion against his own father. The narrator is filled with hate upon simply thinking of his father

¹¹⁹ Gallego Cuiñas utilizes a similar term, “el enemigo que está detrás,” to describe the US government in *De abril en adelante*: “el ‘enemigo que está detrás’ – en la sombra – es el gobierno Estadounidense, el cual propició la incursión de Trujillo (formando en sus filas durante la intervención de 1916) en el poder y que más tarde dio el beneplácito y la aquiescencia a su modo de gobernar, arrogándose el tirano su apoyo en muchas decisiones” (163).

(17),¹²⁰ in large part because he is unable to forget the countless times he hit and sexually abused his mother, Simián.

Trujillo is cast as the less obvious father figure (as compared to Señor Vieth); the novel chronicles his role in the nation prior to his rise to the presidency. Ramón comes into direct contact with the young Trujillo as a *gavillero* awaiting execution. Notably, not only is Ramón proud of his inclusion as a member of the rebel forces, but he recognizes the significance of his patriotic contribution – as a Haitian – to the country’s fight: “El hijo de la haitiana luchó por la causa de los patriotas dominicanos” (27). The young Trujillo, then, is the individual who delivers Ramón to the Americans for his execution, leading him to a room full of “oficiales gringos” (81). While his physical presence in the novel is fleeting, the violence of Trujillo is highlighted, Ramón remembering, “me levantaron con violencia” (81), emphasizing a disposition that later defined the dictator. Critic Gallego Cuiñas comments on the presentation of the *trujillista* military in Veloz Maggiolo’s work – noting its inclusion in the author’s later work, *De abril en adelante*, as “sumo exponente de la crueldad y la bestialidad” of the US Invasion (156). This same cruelty permeates the depiction of the US Marine-trained *Guardia Nacional* in *La vida no tiene nombre*. Ramón goes as far as to describe the troops as “los gringos del infierno” and classifies Trujillo and others who joined forces with the outsiders as “dominicanos que han vendido su alma” (83). In this way, *La vida no tiene nombre* construes as polar opposites the Dominicans who “sell their souls” to the US Marines and “sell out” their native country and the rebel forces, including *Haitian-*

¹²⁰ “Pienso en papá y todavía el odio me rezuma en las entrañas” (17).

Dominicans such as Ramón, that fight for national interests and dethrone formal (exterior) political institutions.

While Ramón clarifies he is proud of his role in the *revoluciones montoneras*, he also expresses his disenchantment with the rebellion, in this way speaking to the failure of the national project or “proyecto nacional,” a shared theme in both Dominican and Latin American narrative that also serves as evidence of Veloz Maggiolo’s skepticism of the social and cultural optimism that followed Trujillo’s death. Ramón outlines the plight of the rebels and questions the value of fighting for Dominican compatriots who “le negamos el agua para la sed y el candil para lo oscuro.” At the end of a nearly page-long rant, he concludes: “¿Cómo creemos que podemos pelear así? Hacerlo es seguir forzándolos revolver en mano y eso no es liberarlos, a nadie se libera por la brava, quien no tenga conciencia de que tiene que el libre se hunda, que se lo lleve el diablo” (99).¹²¹ Ramón’s disenchantment with the rebel forces is largely based on the fact violence, as opposed to goals such as justice and liberation for the Dominican people, becomes the heart of the rebellion. Ramón’s critique of the rebellion can be compared to the ending of Mariano Azuela’s seminal novel about the Mexican Revolution, *Los de abajo* (1915), which highlights the irrationality and senselessness of war when there is no ideological thrust. Ramón’s disillusionment with the *gavilleros* in part further problematizes his construction of the two “padres villanos,” but it also points back to the absurdity of life,

¹²¹ While the values of the *gavilleros* began as patriotic, defending the nation against exterior presence on the island, the rebel forces “terminó degenerándose y convirtiéndose en fuerzas temerarias y temibles a los ojos de la población, y a los gavilleros se sumaron todas la banda deseosas de saqueo, sin escrúpulos para violar y matar, para robar y atemorizar, y esos elementos negativos, aunque numérica y militarmente engrosaban el peloton de combatientes, moralmente desacreditaban al movimiento revolucionario” (Rosario Candelier 87).

referencing the novel's title, the narrator-protagonist a metaphorical and literal "prisoner" of the asininity and irrationality that defines life on all levels and for all individuals, Haitian or Dominican.

Race (Un)-simplified: The Case of the Haitian-Dominican

The absurdity of life reflected in the novel's title also speaks to the complexity and non-conformity of the narrative itself, typical of literature pertaining to or in the wake of the movement of the Latin American Boom. The example above of the two villains portrayed in the text – the eventual *padre de la nación* and Ramón's own father – accompanied by a downtrodden, disillusioned portrayal of the rebels fighting against the *Guardia Nacional* is also indicative of the various narrative levels of *La vida no tiene nombre*. Much like *El hombre del acordeón*, Veloz Maggiolo's Occupation-centered novel transgresses any classification of "una historia simple." The placement of the testimony in the hands of the Haitian-Dominican protagonist, Ramón, allows for an alternate representation of the Haitian subject in Dominican literature that distorts the vision of the country as white, Spanish, and Catholic and re-contextualizes race in the context of an important historical moment in the Dominican Republic. Here, I want to focus again on how un-simplifying the role of the Haitian or Haitian-Dominican *off* the borderline serves to dissipate both the metaphorical and literal, tangible *raya* and expand the space(s) inhabited by the Dominican Republic's Other through the further analysis of the racial discrimination present in the novel and the significance of Ramón's voice.

La vida no tiene nombre at times compares the racism Haitians face in the eastern region of the Dominican Republic to the racism encountered by poor, black Dominicans.

Ramón describes those on the *hacienda* who were treated better than his mother, Simián, for no reason other than the color of their skin: “En la hacienda había otras negras que eran mejor tratadas que Simián. Esas no venían de Haití, eran dominicanas y mi padre no las odiaba tanto” (25). This quote highlights the deep-seated hatred Dominicans traditionally harbor toward their Haitian neighbors, understood as a consequence of earlier French and Spanish colonial policies and the Haitian Occupation. It is clear, too, that Ramón is cognizant of this history, at times conflicted, between the two countries of Hispaniola as he references the Haitian Occupation (1822-44) as a possible motive for Dominicans hating and/or fearing Haitians when talking about Simián: “descendiente de unos que cierta vez invandieron a Santo Domingo: los haitianos” (25). While it is perceptible that Haitians are treated more poorly than black Dominicans, or even black immigrants from other neighboring Caribbean nations typically referred to as *cocolos*, Ramón demonstrates that his *haitianness* – a source of *orgullo* for the narrator – does not suppress his *dominicanness*, as he endeavors to show that he is “más dominicano” (26) than his Dominican half-siblings by joining ranks with the rebel forces. The fact Ramón references the first and longest Haitian Occupation of the Dominican Republic, stating his mother is a descendant of those who invaded Santo Domingo (thus recognizing he also is a descendant of Haitians), perhaps links his idealism and pride in his dual status as Haitian *and* Dominican to the twenty-two year Haitian Domination and its leader. Did Ramón’s outlook, then, grow from an idolization of Jean-Pierre Boyer and his nineteenth-century ideals? It is possible Boyer, who desired to merge Haiti and Santo Domingo as one united front, represents for the young *gavillero* a role-model, a powerful Haitian leader who sought to eliminate slavery and re-vision agricultural space and use in Santo

Domingo.¹²² His vision of camaraderie and brotherhood between the Republic of Haiti and Santo Domingo in the early nineteenth century is one Ramón likely respected; Boyer proclaimed in January of 1922: “pues según ofrece viene como padre, amigo y hermano a abrazaros todos bajo la égida tutelar de una sola constitución” (qtd. in Moya Pons, *La dominación* 31).

While the narrator self-identifies as a proud Dominican patriot, he does not make the mistake of considering himself an alternative to the racial and ethnic Other (or rather, Dominicans do not allow him to misjudge his role in society). As son of a Haitian, servant mother, “El Cuerno” is marked as *un haitiano* in *El Seibo*. Ramón demonstrates his understanding of his predicament by stating to a fellow black *gavillero*, Juan: “los dominicanos nacimos para que nos pisen” (53). Nonetheless, the revolutionary theme in *La vida no tiene nombre*, guided by Ramón’s testimony as he awaits his execution, is impactful – more so as Ramón is not just another rebel fighter, but a *Haitian-Dominican* rebel fighter. De Maesenner agrees: “La aproximación por parte de este revolucionario sencillo, hijo natural de un padre dominicano traidor y de una haitiana, es muy impactante” (*Encuentros* 44).

To further comment on Veloz Maggiolo’s purposeful election to tell the story of the 1916-24 Occupation through the lens of a Haitian-Dominican revolutionary, the fact that Ramón is positioned as the victim of Dominican society and not, at any time, victimizer is key. Even when the violence of the *gavilleros* is revealed, Ramón refuses to succumb to senseless killings, voicing his disaccord with the rebels growing affinity for

¹²² Moya Pons confirms the first public decision of Boyer after official possession of Santo Domingo “fue decretar la abolición de la esclavitud y prometer tierras a todos los libertos para que pudieran dedicarse a vivir de la agricultura” (*La dominación* 35).

theft and violence. The reader sides with the narrator as his puppet-like role in his “nameless life” – with no real control over his life or ability to seek new opportunities – positions him as a disposable member of Dominican society. “El cuerno” hypothetically asks on page 26, further alluding to his inability to change life’s course: “¿Qué culpa teníamos Simián y yo en todo esto?” Ramón’s existential pessimism is exemplified not only by his personal situation and a life that “se ha reducido a la guerra” (52), but also is present in his description of the vodou rituals practiced by Haitians living in the *bateyes*: “los haitianos de los demás bateyes vinieron a la hacienda, encendieron una hoguera en un pelado del monte, y empezaron a cantar y a saltar alrededor de la misma con tres aullidos de desesperación” (29). While these “aullidos de desesperación” represent the plight of the Haitian both on and off the border, Ramón’s voice as a Haitian-Dominican *gavillero* expands the stereotypical role of the Haitian subject in Dominican literature and bestows new meaning to the aforementioned shrieks of desperation – they are also shouts of and for inclusion, rebellion, and solidarity.

“Pocas obras [dominicanas]” on the Haitian Subject?

*Pocas obras y pocas veces el tema del haitiano había sido tocado por autores nacionales.*¹²³

Marcio Veloz Maggiolo

The above quote comes from Veloz Maggiolo’s aforementioned “Tipología del tema haitiano,” published in 1977. The relevancy of this statement more than a decade into the twenty-first century is debatable. While the Haitian subject is not a common theme for Dominican authors, such presence in Dominican national literature has

¹²³ “Tipología del tema haitiano,” 94.

increased since the late seventies, especially when considering the literary corpus of Dominican American authors examined in the following chapter. Not to mention – as Veloz Maggiolo’s “Tipología” confirms – other Dominican authors have undertaken the Haitian theme. Other noteworthy works, to name only a few, include Manuel Mora Serrano’s *Juego de domino* (1974), Juan Bosch’s story “Luis Pié” (written in 1942), Diego D’Acalá’s *La frontera* (1994), Mélida García’s historical novel *Oro, sulfuro y muerte* (1999), and the more recent *Trujillo y los secretos de su hija rayana* (2011) by Favio Ramón Montes de Oca.¹²⁴ My decision to focus solely on novels written by Marcio Veloz Maggiolo in this chapter reflects his affinity for returning in his literature to the Trujillo regime and his repeated re-examination of the role of Haitians during and before the *trujillato*.¹²⁵ Veloz Maggiolo’s incessant questioning in his narrative of who forms part of the Dominican society is crucial to examining the role(s) he allots to the Haitian subject:

La concepción de Veloz Maggiolo sobre la identidad dominicana insta a reflexionar sobre quiénes son los dominicanos, generalmente en relación con el resto de Latinoamérica y el mundo. Es preciso aclarar que el cuestionamiento de la identidad en sus narraciones tiene a inclinarse por la protagonización del “otro,” pero se presenta, sin lugar a dudas, desde una óptica histórica totalizadora que enfoca todos los grupos humanos de nuestra historia cultural. (Rodríguez-Henríquez 65)

¹²⁴ It should be noted that numerous Dominican poets have also incorporated the Haitian subject in their work, namely Manuel Rueda, Pedro Mir, Ramón Francisco, and Manuel de Cabral. Often times, the Haitian subject penetrates poems by these Dominican nationals as an integrated part of society, and an integral part of the Dominican *paisaje*.

¹²⁵ The decision to consider works of a male author in this chapter is not purposeful. While female Dominican authors began to publish more frequently post-Trujillo, the primary genre of expression for Dominican females, especially in the mid to late twentieth century, has been poetry. Sara V. Rosell confirms this “...la poesía es el género que más impulse la apertura y el desarrollo de la literatura femenina” (36). See her book *La novela de escritoras dominicanas de 1990 a 2007* for more on Dominican women writers.

Veloz Maggiolo's protagonization of the Other – the Haitian-Dominican Ramón and border subject Honorio Lora – serves as a prime example of the author's purposeful placement of non-Dominican minorities, whether racial, ethnic, or otherwise, to narrate the Dominican nation.

The role of literature in re-examining history and providing a new way of interpreting the past that conflicts with the patriarchal, dominant understanding of important historical moments is central to the present dissertation. Valerio-Holguín notes: “In the long run the texts that have succeeded in denouncing at an international level the human rights violations committed by Trujillo's regime are not testimonial accounts but rather historical novels” (“El trujillato” 207). I would argue, however, that the work of Veloz Maggiolo expands beyond the realm of testimony or traditional historical narrative and succeeds in not only denouncing the Trujillo regime, but also in re-writing the role of non-elites in events – such as the first US Marine Occupation and the 1937 Haitian Massacre – of great consequence in the history of Hispaniola.

CHAPTER 4

HISPANIOLA BEYOND ITS BORDERS: HAITI IN DOMINICAN AMERICAN LITERATURE

*Come on down Come on down see the
fantasy island
Where history hums like a tamed
dragon
We have this habit of carrying our dead
with us
They stick to the bottom of our tongues
We sing with them from sunset to
sundown
They rise from the bottom of El Masacre
We don't bury our dead
We don't.
Marianela Medrano, "El Corte"*

"Hyphenated [Dominican] Subjects" With Alternate Views of Haiti

The experience of Dominicans living in the diaspora has led to a unique literary corpus that re-contextualizes the sentiments Dominicans harbor toward their neighbors in Haiti. The break from the Island's cultural and social atmosphere allows for authors to more freely explore and express their identities, and this self-exploration and "soul-searching" is a defining factor of Latino/a literature. As Pedro L. San Miguel confirms in *The Imagined Island*, Caribbean history has been drastically molded by external factors (31), and the case of the Dominican Republic is no exception. The United States has had an influential role not only in further emphasizing a racial ideology in the Dominican Republic based on denial and a conceptualization of the Haitian as the black Other, but also in its more recent capacity as a space for Dominicans of the diaspora to confront their racial misconceptions. For Dominican Americans, an exploration of identity – in the

form of literary expression – leads to a particularly novel representation of the Haitian subject. The space of the diaspora is key to a re-examination of the self. This sentiment and connection with Afro roots forms the basis of the popular refrain for Dominicans in New York: “Nosotros somos los haitianos de aquí” (Victoriano-Martínez 222). This refrain asserts that in the United States, Dominicans become outsiders, foreigners. They are to “Americans” or Dominican Americans, in this sense, what Haitians are to Dominicans in the Dominican Republic.¹²⁶ The outsider sentiment Dominicans experience in the US suggests their inner, ideological Border, as Anzaldúa confronts borderlands as the psyche of a person or peoples; the Chicana poet-theorist confirms: “the struggle has always been *inner*” (*Borderlands* 109; my emphasis). Thus, these “inner” borders that Dominicans harbor are reconfigured when the once-islanders cross into the diasporic space; yet while the formation of these new personalized borders can be sources of confusion and denial, they are also seedbeds of empowerment and pride. As Juan Gonzalez confirms in the “mix-up” of Dominicans and Haitians: “New Yorkers tend to mistake them [Dominicans] for blacks who happen to speak Spanish” (117). The fact that Dominicans in the United States begin to associate themselves with the Haitian Other instead of defining themselves *against* it – visibilizing links between the Dominican “us” and Haitian “them” – is reflected in a search for identity in Dominican American literature. Although Latino/a literature is often considered in literary criticism for the ways in which it responds to the author’s concerns with US culture (Luis, *Dance* xi), many Dominican American writers instead return to the dictatorship and other historical

¹²⁶ This refrain rings similar to the frequently quoted phrase of Dominican poet Chiqui Vicioso: “Until I came to New York, I didn’t know I was black” (qtd. in Torres-Saillant, “Introduction” 55).

events for creative, artistic inspiration. In addition to a new racial consciousness gained from experience living in *el exterior* – an experience most often accompanied by relegation to a marginal position in US society – the distancing from the Island also extends to Dominican Latino/a writers a unique, bi-national lens to approach, critique, and re-vision Dominican history.

Before beginning an analysis of selected Dominican American novels and memoirs, it is necessary to expand on the hyphenated identity of Latino/a writers, in an attempt to uncover the meaning and significance behind an individual's classification as "bi-national." While this discussion is applicable to the many different Latin American nationalities falling under the umbrella term "Latino" in the United States, this chapter aims to highlight the Dominican American experience.¹²⁷ First, it is vital at least briefly to mention the term "domincanyork" – a sobriquet for Dominicans living off the island as members of a unique, bipartite entity. The term "domincanyork" is cast in a negative light by Manuel Núñez in *Ocaso de la nación dominicana* (1990). Núñez states that "la infravaloración de sí mismos," with respect to the "dominicanyorks," "lleva a los dominicanos a reproducir un sentimiento de incapacidad en sus propias fuerzas" (459). Josefina Báez, in her performance text *DOMinicanISh* (2005), inverts the negative connotation surrounding the term, much like Puerto Rican American Tato Llaviera and others like Pedro Pietri and Miguel Algarín did for the term "Nuyorican" or "AmeRican."

¹²⁷ The term "Latino" itself has proven problematic, the term often used to refer to an increasingly diverse population in the United States. Dávila (2008) in *Latino Spin: Public Image and the White Washing of Race* points to a contemporary United States discourse that too often over-ethnicizes or de-ethnicizes *Latinos* "whether by presenting them as a threat or as contributors to the 'national community,' by highlighting their growing purchasing power and intrinsic 'values,' or because of their coming of age or eagerness to assimilate" (4-5).

In this way, Báez celebrates the dual identity and positions herself as writer and performer “en la lucha política por la identidad” (Victoriana-Martínez 179). Similar to Baéz, Gustavo Pérez Firmat recognizes the positives of a bi-national or hyphenated identity, despite the difficulties surrounding its negotiation. He states in *Life on the Hyphen* (1994) that, for Cubans at least, the “hyphenated” status should not be indicated by a minus sign, but instead a plus sign: “Perhaps we shall call ourselves Cubans + Americans” (16). Ilan Stavans, in *The Hispanic Condition* (1995), further confirms that while such hyphenation exists, it is also undergoing a transition: “The crossroad where white and brown meet, where *yo soy* meets ‘I am,’ a life in the Spanglish hyphen, is being transformed” (4). I illustrate in the following pages how Latino/a writers have emerged as “transformers” with literature as one of Stavan’s designated “crossroads.”

As Stavans hints at, in his mentioning of “yo soy” and “I am,” language is key to the understanding of the Latino/a identity in the United States, a crucial construct that extends to Latino/a writers as well.¹²⁸ Luis denotes a specific category composed of Latino/a writers born or raised in the United States who, for the most part, write in English. For these writers, their parents’ country of birth is a distant memory. “They compose a literature that searches for their own identity and origins in the United States” (*Dance* xi). It is this group of Latino/a authors – as opposed to individuals raised and educated in their native countries who moved to the United States later in life – whose work “responds to concerns about their isolation within a dominant culture that has denied them an identity and access to mainstream US society... They compose a literature

¹²⁸ Pérez Firmat dedicates a chapter of *Life on the Hyphen* to language. He refers to the term “nilingüe” (46) to represent Latinos who do not truly dominate either Spanish or English.

that searches for their own identity and origins in the United States” (Luis, *Dance* xi). Junot Díaz, Julia Alvarez, Loida Maritza Pérez, and Raquel Cepeda were all raised in the United States. Their work encompasses a search for their characters’ identity, as well as their own identities, inclusive of African roots. The role language plays for US Latino/a authors also suggests the intended audience of these diasporic voices, the majority writing and publishing in English. As a result of this language choice, however, these writers narrow their possible readership and exclude a majority of Dominicans living on the Island who do not speak English.

When focusing specifically on Dominicans of the US diaspora, it is worthwhile to mention their newcomer status compared to Cubans and Puerto Ricans, the other Hispanic Caribbean immigrant groups in the US with significant, recorded migratory waves and a strong physical presence. Puerto Ricans migrated largely to New York as legal residents of the US, the majority as a result of Operation Bootstrap that fostered a change in the Puerto Rican economy in the 1940s and 1950s. The Cuban migrant population is centered in Miami and, while there were various waves of migration, saw its largest increase in number after the 1959 revolution of Fidel Castro. Often, the social and political composition of varying migratory waves to the US is incredibly unique, and the wave of Dominicans arriving to the United States exemplifies this distinctiveness. During the Trujillo regime, Dominicans fled the country as political exiles. After Trujillo’s assassination in 1961, Dominican immigration remained largely political in nature as immigrants sought to escape the political uprisings and unstable governments, namely the popular uprising in 1965 seeking to restore political power to Juan Bosch. According to Juan Gonzalez, “Between 1961 and 1986 more than 400,000 people legally

immigrated to the United States from the Dominican Republic...making Dominican migration one of the largest to this country of the past forty years” (117).¹²⁹ Considering that the migration of Dominicans to the United States is a more recent trend (as compared to Puerto Ricans and Cubans), it is not entirely possible, less than a half-century later, to fully conclude how the bi-national identities created as a result of this migration reconfigure in a global context. It is possible, however, to reflect on the ways in which such a distancing from the Island changes perspectives on Hispaniola and, in particular, the Dominican-Haitian dynamic. In the following pages, this altered perspective will be examined in works of four aforementioned Dominican American writers: Alvarez, Díaz, Pérez, and Cepeda.

Each of these authors, although in different ways, attacks the mistakes of the past on the Island and, furthermore, debunks the cock-fight metaphor proposed by Wucker in *Why the Cocks Fight* by creating, in a literary sense, a contrapuntal, shared space where both Dominicans and Haitians co-exist. In respect to the Massacre of 1937, both Alvarez and Díaz – two of the most widely read Latino/a authors who have both become spokespersons in their own right for Dominicans of the diaspora – have not backed away from reexamination of the history of their homeland. Alvarez gives life to Haitian characters affected by the Massacre in her novel *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991) and delves completely, on both a personal and literary level, into Haiti in her recent memoir *A Wedding in Haiti* (2012). Díaz’s *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007), for which the author became the second Latino/a to win the Pulitzer Prize, offers a non-traditional reading of the Massacre through historical and vehemently

¹²⁹ Fernando Valerio-Holguín and William Luis also stress that Dominican migration is a relatively recent trend, especially when compared to that of Puerto Ricans and Cubans.

opinionated footnotes, while both his short story collections *Drown* (1997) and *This is How You Lose Her* (2013) provide a raw understanding of how Dominicans, from the perspective of a male narrator, view Haitians. Following the analyses of these texts by Alvarez and Díaz, I turn to Pérez's *Geographies of Home* (2001) and Cepeda's memoir *Bird of Paradise: How I Became Latina* (2013). These works do not shy away from Hispaniola's troubled past, while at the same time uncovering positive elements in the contiguous coexistence between the two countries sharing the same island.

Alvarez, Díaz, Cepeda, and Pérez anchor their texts in the past in such a way that reveals how political powers, throughout the history of Hispaniola, have deformed, restrained, and suppressed the Haitian subject. While the novels and memoirs examined in this chapter appear rooted in the past, it is a past intercalated with the present.

Cepeda's memoir, for example, details the findings of her DNA test, contradictorily accepting *and* contesting the results with a glance into the author's own personal history and battles with her hyphenated identity. The analysis also varies in regards to genre, including novel, short story, and memoir – with a sustained focus on the alternate representation of Haitians and a move toward acceptance of and a search for African roots. Moreover, an analysis of Dominican American literary works is evidence of how these writers have brought the culture and history of Hispaniola to a world audience; Díaz was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *Oscar Wao* and Alvarez's *García Girls* has been translated into over ten languages. The contemporary works of Dominican American writers highlight the longevity of the nebulous, yet intricate literary representations of occidental Quisqueya. In the analysis to follow of the aforementioned Latino/a texts, a question that continues to resurface concerns what the specific space of the United States

does for the writer when revisiting the history of his or her country of origin. Of primary interest is how these literary texts have re-written Haiti by re-examining and shining new light on the mistakes of their homeland. For these Dominican American authors, Haiti and its people are integral parts of Dominican culture, community, and history. Before looking more closely at the aforementioned texts, it is worthwhile to hint at the troubled history of Hispaniola – the reason, perhaps, why these Dominican American authors are unable to detach themselves. For Díaz, the Island has undergone so much hardship it has transformed into the ideal setting for an apocalyptic plot in his short story “Monstro” (published in *The New Yorker*, 2012). He remarks in a recent interview:

So many apocalypses have already taken place on that island, including the one that gave rise to the modern world, I figured: what’s one more? If any place could take it, it would be that poor island. What sparked this story was: A couple years ago I got to thinking that our world has so many blind spots, so many places and people it intentionally doesn’t want to see – if some menace began to coalesce in these spaces, our own unseeing would, in fact, blind us to the danger. (Leyshon 1-2)

Accepting Hispaniola as a “blind spot” aligns the island with Foucault’s notion of a heterotopic space – a space that is disturbing, transforming, contradictory, easily forgotten. Building upon Foucault’s structuralism paradigm, his article “Of Other Spaces” regards the present and future as “epoch[s] of space” or “epoch[s] of juxtaposition” in which the relation between time and history allows for the delineation of different types of heterotopic spaces (22). The first distinction of Foucault’s heterotopology is a “crisis heterotopia.” A crisis heterotopia represents a site defined by a state of crisis, a space that is forbidden to those who have no relation to it, a “blind spot” or void for those whose lives are not rooted in the crises of that respective space. Alvarez, Díaz, Pérez, and Cepeda, however, remove such “blindness” in viewing Hispaniola from

the outside and via literature enter the heterotopic space represented by the island and its turbulent past. By seeing and, more importantly, *writing* what others have forgotten or neglected in regards to the history, present, and future of the Island, these authors renew a spirit of resiliency, camaraderie, and mutual respect and understanding between the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

Wed to Haiti: Julia Alvarez's Long-Distance (Literary) Relationship

How the García Girls Lost Their Accents is often approached as a text attempting to grapple with traumatic memories. Critics such as Natalie Carter and Jennifer Bess focus on the role of traumatic memory in the novel and mark the trauma as not only personal, but historical and national. I argue that the trauma in Alvarez's work is also *transnational*, as it reaches the western limits of the Dominican border and expands beyond them, intertwining Haiti's tragic past with the Dominican Republic's. Carter attributes the root of the trauma in Alvarez's *García Girls* to the tyrannical twentieth-century dictator: "Fifty years after his assassination, the pain and trauma that Trujillo inflicted upon virtually anyone associated with the Dominican Republic during this era is still heartbreakingly apparent, and perhaps nowhere is that trauma more thoroughly illustrated than in the literature of Dominican born-authors like Julia Alvarez" (320). "Dominican-born" however, cannot be read as synonymous with "born in the Dominican Republic." Although a daughter of Dominican parents, Alvarez was in fact born in the United States, a point she clarifies on the "About Me" page of her website: "I guess the first thing I should say is that I was *not* born in the Dominican Republic. The flap bio on *García Girls* mentioned I was raised in the D.R., and a lot of bios after that changed

raised to born, and soon I was getting calls from my mother. I was born in New York City during my parents' first and failed stay in the United States" (n.p.).¹³⁰ On the other hand, Alvarez's connection of the Dominican national trauma to Trujillo, as Carter alludes, is undeniable. Alan Cambeira suggests that the tyranny of the Trujillo era perhaps encompasses the most "heinous record of reprehensible human rights atrocities" in the Caribbean (12). Alvarez, through her writing, wrestles with such atrocities, forcing her readers to confront them as well. It is no secret, especially in *García Girls*, that Trujillo himself, despite the fact his maternal grandmother was Haitian, was the brainchild of the 1937 Massacre. A return to the *trujillato*, overwhelming in contemporary Dominican literature written on the island, is echoed in Dominican American literature. Many critics liken the recurrence of Trujillo themes to an overbearing shadow cast by the Dominican dictator, Gallego Cuiñas remarking that by re-visiting the Trujillo regime in their novels these authors "dar caza al fantasma" (414).

The protagonist of *García Girls* is Yolanda, nicknamed "Yo." For Alvarez, Yo is a purposeful nickname, ("Yo" is the English pronoun "I" in Spanish), linking the character to the author herself: Yolanda/Julia's¹³¹ family subtly resists the dictatorship and refuses to turn their eyes or hearts from the slaughter of Haitian nationals by taking in a Haitian fleeing the Massacre. This Haitian is Chucha, the family's maid, whose

¹³⁰ Numerous critics have incorrectly cited Alvarez's birth in the Dominican Republic, including Carter, "Julia Alvarez was born in the Dominican Republic in 1951 and lived there until she was ten" (325).

¹³¹ From this point forward, I will refer to the Yolanda character in *García Girls* as Yolanda/Julia to emphasize the binary connotation and its importance in the novel. Yo serves as a constant reminder to the reader that the novel is historical fiction, based on the author's adolescence and adulthood in the United States, namely New York City, alongside her three sisters. Although the novel's character, Yolanda, was born in the Dominican Republic and not New York City, (as Alvarez was), the connections between the two are still important.

inclusion as a character allows the novel to transform into, in Alvarez's words, a "revolution of truth-telling and self-invention" (*Something to Declare* 109).¹³²

Chucha serves the family for thirty-two years, and it is in the chapter "The Blood of the Conquistadores" that her character, barely escaping death, comes to life.

Yolanda/Julia's sister, Fifi, shares her "neighbor's" story:

There was this old lady, Chucha, who had worked in Mami's family forever and who had this face like someone had wrung it out after washing it to try and get some of the black out. I mean, Chucha was super wrinkled and Haitian blue-black, not Dominican *café-con-leche* black. She was real Haitian too and that's why she couldn't say certain words like the word for parsley or anyone's name that had a *j* in it... She was always in a bad mood – but you couldn't get her to crack a smile or cry or anything. It was like all her emotions were spent, on account of everything she went through in her young years. Way back before Mami was even born, Chucha had just appeared at my grandfather's doorstep one night, begging to be taken in. Turns out it was the night of the massacre when Trujillo had decreed that all blacks Haitians on our side of the island would be executed by dawn. There's a river the bodies were finally thrown into that supposedly still runs red to this day, fifty years later. Chucha had escaped from some canepicker's camp and was asking for asylum. Papito took her in, poor skinny little thing. (218)

Chucha's story warrants the construction of a crossroads between traumas as "the fate of Chucha and that of the García's tell of *national tragedies*" (Bess 97; my emphasis).

These are national tragedies, however, that transform into transnational ones, suffered by those on both sides of the Island. Luis reads these tragedies in *García Girls* as political and containing an over-arching Caribbean character. He remarks, "The displacement of Caribbean people from their islands to the United States for political or economic reasons

¹³² In an autobiographical essay titled "A White Woman of Color," Alvarez briefly speaks of her family's maids in the Dominican Republic, alluding to the Haitian ancestry of many. One maid in particular, Misiá, is not only Haitian, but had also been "spared from the machetes of the 1937 Massacre when she was taken in and hidden from the prowling *guardias* by the family" (143). The fictional Chucha in *García Girls* shares a biography with Misiá, leading to the assumption that the character of Chucha is based on Misiá.

has produced a tension between the culture of the country of origin and that of the adopted homeland” (*Dance* 266). The danger the García family escapes toward the end of Trujillo’s reign by fleeing to New York City emphasizes the multilayered history of the Dominican Republic, Hispaniola, and the Caribbean at large, in this way addressing Glissant’s understanding of the collective or shared reality unique to those whose histories have been erased by colonialism. In the opening chapter of his foundational text, *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant revisits the experience of deportation to the Americas and remarks, “Although you are alone in this suffering, you share in the unknown with others whom you have yet to know” (6). Alvarez, writing a new Dominican (American) history, and thus filling historical voids, also presents a history that forms part of the greater Caribbean history – an all-encompassing, shared history that accommodates the diaspora and its subjects.

One can unravel a historic Caribbean parallel that spans generations upon considering the García family and their loyal maid, Chucha. The García’s history and Chucha’s history are, in a sense, one in the same: a decade or so after the slaughtering of approximately 20,000 Haitians by Trujillo’s henchmen, Yolanda/Julia’s grandfather is incarcerated for taking part in an underground movement against the dictator. As a direct result, the SIM, Trujillo’s “secret service,” keep a nightly watch on her father’s comings and goings (Alvarez’s own father was also involved in plots against the dictator), monitoring his activities (6). Alvarez’s character Chucha serves as a window into the shared history of the two countries of Hispaniola and represents a universal Quisqueyan subject. Just like the Haitian Kreyòl speakers who stutter as they pronounce the *j* in *perejil*, Yolanda/Julia experiences a similar sensation. As she begins to recite poetry on

stage, “Her tongue feels as if it has been stuffed into her mouth to keep her quiet” (19-20). Although the author’s alter ego in *García Girls* might appear tongue-tied, Alvarez does not hesitate when her pen hits the paper, and in this way she gives voice to the forgotten and/or suffocated stories like Chucha’s. Thanks to Alvarez, Chucha and her story of survival persist, and critics like Bess conclude that Chucha “will be the one left to suffer true powerlessness while the wealthy lighter-skinned García’s escape to safety” (97) are proven wrong. Instead, both female characters – Yolanda/Julia and Chucha – transgress time, history, and geography.

Just as *García Girls* can be classified as autobiographical fiction a unique merging of genres *A Wedding in Haiti* moves beyond the one-sided generic definition of memoir and instead classifies, as Alvarez herself confirms, as an “us-moir” (Myers 171). This genre-bending term provides an alternative to the self-centered, introspective reading of a typical memoir, or “me-moir,” and instead focuses on the “we” or the Spanish, *nosotros*, present in the text. The “us” in “us-moir” in *A Wedding in Haiti* lends itself to a multitude of interpretations. One might read the plural “we” in the text as Alvarez and her husband, Bill Eichner; or Alvarez and her Haitian friend and “godchild,” Piti. The plural here, however, is not limited to people; it can also stand for two geographical spaces: the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

A Wedding in Haiti represents Alvarez’s most recent work and her only publication set primarily in Haiti. It speaks to the atrocities of the past and the poverty, destitution, and resilience of the present, while also anticipating future Dominican governmental actions dealing with Dominican-Haitian relations. Alvarez writes movingly about entering Haiti from the Dominican Republic: “The soldier nods, the gates part, and

just like that, we're in Haiti, and free to proceed. No red tape, no need to wheedle our way in. Haiti will take us without blinking an eye or checking our documents" (31). Contrastingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, the reverse border crossing from Haiti back into the Dominican Republic is not as simple with three Haitians in tow. Alvarez makes use of the popular Dominican saying *El que tiene boca llega a Roma* (If you have a mouth you can get into Rome) to conclude, "If you are Haitian, getting into the DR is another story" (114).

Returning to Alvarez's uncomplicated entrance into Haiti, it is valuable to pore over Haiti as she sees it. With the Dominican border far from view, it is a different Haiti – one not depicted in the media – that unfolds in front of Alvarez. Although Haiti bears scars of the past, both part one and two of the memoir (the first, a trip to Haiti to attend a wedding, and the second, a return trip to the country after the catastrophic 2010 earthquake) show a country filled with hope, resilience, and determination. The relationship between the Dominican Republic and Haiti is a contrapuntal one, leading Alvarez to a subtle re-write of José Martí's quote about Cuba and Puerto Rico as "two wings of a bird that can't fly unless they work together." Alvarez substitutes the countries mentioned by Martí with two others, instead remarking: "*Haiti and the Dominican Republic* are the two wings of a bird that can't fly unless they work together" (177; my emphasis). Other Dominican writers and literary critics have emphasized the important interplay of unity and difference between the two countries that together form Hispaniola, including Matibag in *Haitian-Dominican Counterpoint*. This two-parts-one-piece metaphor, however, is problematized as Alvarez reflects on the countries' past, remembering Haiti's "race-driven history, and not just during colonial times, and not just

whites against blacks, but internally down the generations” (107) and the 1937 Massacre (123). Despite the oftentimes heavy-hearted and somber tone of the memoir, the suffering on the Haitian side of the border is rendered palpable and tractable by Alvarez. It becomes clear that Haiti, time and time again, for historical, political, racial, and even natural reasons, has had a target on its back. But when Haiti falls, as *A Wedding in Haiti* suggests, it gets back up. *A Wedding in Haiti* is a work of self-writing that wrote itself. Alvarez was urged to see and write Haiti by her own impulse to “be by Haiti’s side” (148) – a side that she remains near in a spatial sense, as she, a Dominican-American, is a citizen of Haiti’s neighbor country, and also in a personal and spiritual sense, unable and unwilling to brush aside Haiti’s call for help and will to be “seen.”

The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao: An Afro-Nerd Paves the Way for Racial Inclusivity

Díaz, like Alvarez, imagines the Dominican nation as a fictional narrative, “a ‘text’ that is both written upon by legal, political, and cultural authority, while at the same time writing upon individual and collective identities by virtue of selective memory and historical erasure” (Preziuso 1). This “national text” is one that Haiti cannot be written out of, as it represents an integral piece of the Dominican Republic’s historical puzzle. As *Oscar Wao* confronts the interstices of the *trujillato* and its paternalistic, authoritative discourse, one that associated blackness with Haitians; the novel lends itself to re-visioning the intersecting histories of the two countries. Díaz, then, is a Dominican American author who willfully, and openly, aligns himself with Haiti. This literary coupling and camaraderie is best exemplified by Díaz’s tendency to re-interpret the

history of Hispaniola. In a way, it becomes his(story) as the author's cast of *male* narrators pierces the Island's troubled past as if it were an open wound. Díaz masterfully negotiates the filling of this historical void by introducing *fukú* into the novel.¹³³ *Fukú* refers to an ancient, ancestral curse that arrived on the island when Europeans first encountered the island and intensified with the brutal dictatorship of Trujillo. To this day, if you say the name Cristobal Colón – Christopher Columbus to North Americans – the belief is that the *fukú* will claim you as well. According to folklore, one must then cry out “Zafa” to deactivate the malediction; the mere name of the “great discoverer” invokes the curse. For Díaz, however, Trujillo reigns supreme as the center of the Dominican *fukú*. De Maeseneer clarifies, “From the first mention of Trujillo, the dictator is positioned within a context of wrongdoings and uncontrollable power. *Fukú* represents a power uncontrollable by reason” (*Encuentros* 109; my translation).

The novel's preface, centered on the Dominican-born *fukú*, already demands an ample historical scope. The first sentence reads, “They say it came first from Africa, carried in the screams of the enslaved; that it was the death bane of the Tainos, uttered just as one world perished and another began; that it was a demon drawn into Creation through the nightmare door that was cracked open in the Antilles” (1). These early references to the first encounters between Africans, Taínos, and Europeans clarify that the novel is no *Enriquillo*, referring to Manuel de Jesús Galván's nineteenth-century “foundational” Dominican novel that erases all African influence on the island. Such references also set the stage for the introduction of the Cabral de León family (to which

¹³³ *Fukú* is also known as “the curse of the new world” since its origin is Columbus' arrival in 1492. The grandiose monument to Columbus in the Dominican capital of Santo Domingo is “el faro a Colon” (inaugurated in 1992), considered to this day a cursed lighthouse.

Oscar Wao belongs), a family that over three generations has dealt with more than enough of their fair share of *fukú*. Oscar Wao is an “overweight ‘ghetto nerd’ from New Jersey” (Hanna 498), but he is not the family member or representative of the Cabral de León family that critiques the past of the Island. Instead, Yunior, the novel’s mysterious narrator and Oscar’s almost-friend, is the one who responds to the silences in the history of the Dominican Republic and attempts to fill the gaps. While the introductory chapter links Trujillo to the *fukú*, it also gifts to the history-challenged reader a “mandatory two seconds of Dominican history” (2). This history consists of an abnormally lengthy footnote, mentioning the 1937 Massacre twice. The first mention of the Massacre appears among an elongated list of Trujillo’s tactics that gave way to his “umbrella of control” and accompanies a lively description of *el generalismo*:

A portly, sadistic, pig-eyed mulato who bleached his skin, wore platform shoes, and had a fondness for Napoleon-era haberdashery, Trujillo (also known as El Jefe, the Failed Cattle Thief, and Fuckface) came to control nearly every aspect of the DR’s political, cultural, social and economic life through a potent (and familiar) mixture of violence, intimidation, massacre, rape, co-optation, and terror; treated the country like it was a plantation and he was the master. (2)

Later, in the same footnote, the Massacre is listed as one of the “outstanding accomplishments” of El Jefe, this time deemed “the 1937 genocide against the Haitian and Haitian-Dominican community” (3). Later, after mentioning in the main text that Trujillo “killed whomever he wanted to kill,” Yunior describes, again in a footnote, the aspirations of the tyrant “to become an architect of history, and through a horrifying ritual of silence and blood, machete and perejil, darkness and denial, inflicted a true border on

the countries, a border that exists beyond maps, that is carved directly into the histories and imaginaries of a people” (225).¹³⁴

If one reads Trujillo as an architect of Dominican history, he is one whose principal tools include violence and fear. As critic Hanna states, “In the case of the Dominican Republic, the founding is bathed in blood as Yunion notes that it is completed through the reinforcement of the border that abuts the Haitian half of the island, along with the genocide of Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans within the borders of the nation” (503). This strong and palpable, albeit relatively fleeting, mention of the 1937 Massacre in *Oscar Wao* distinguishes itself from the brief mention of the Massacre and other Haitian-Dominican charged events in novels by Dominicans, written in the Dominican Republic and in Spanish, as the reality of the horrifying event pervades the writing itself, constantly meriting mention in both footnotes and the body-text. The Massacre is mentioned, in total, in three footnotes (24, 25, and 26) and is frequently alluded to in the text. Such references are read by Díaz as “blank pages,” or rather, as attempts to fill in historical gaps (119). De Maeseneer expands on the notion of such historical black holes or voids and offers a quote from an interview with Díaz on the topic: “If the novel was able to say the things that it does not, at the heart of the novel the reader would immediately encounter the genocide of the twentieth century against the Haitians and Haitians of Dominican descent, but on the surface level the reader can also find in the

¹³⁴ The strong relationship between footnotes and text, important to achieving a thorough reading of *Oscar Wao*, follows an established Latin American tradition. In Manuel Puig’s *El beso de la mujer araña* (1976), for example, the Argentine author elects to utilize footnotes to allude to his political intentions for writing the novel. Puig’s footnotes often contain factual information pertaining to psychoanalytic theory. This dialogue between footnotes and text has a similar purpose in Díaz’s novel, as it creates a double-narrative and an alternative historical account.

novel the genocide of the Dominican Republic, the Caribbean, and of the New World. The book [*Oscar Wao*] approaches this theme indirectly, because the New World approaches it indirectly” (De Maeseneer, *Encuentros* 117; my translation).

Another indirect refutation of and response to the Massacre in *Oscar Wao* is the recurring mention of a faceless figure. This “man without a face” haunts the novel, taking part in evil acts. When Oscar is dragged to the cane fields outside Santo Domingo by two Dominican men who want him dead, or at the least severely injured, he sees this mysterious figure: “They had guns! He [Oscar] stared into the night, hoping that maybe there would be some U.S. Marines out for a stroll, but there was only a lone man sitting in his rocking chair out in front of his ruined house and for a moment Oscar could have sworn the dude had no face, but then the killers got back into the car and drove” (298). This allusion serves as a harrowing reminder of the anonymous victims of Trujillo. It can also be read as a subtle reference to the 1937 Massacre, as laborers, both Haitian and Haitian-Dominican, were brutally killed with machetes. Many reports mentioned the disfigurement of victims’ faces and bodies.¹³⁵

Díaz plays with the notion of Haitianness and confronts the Island’s troubled history in his two collections of short stories as well. His breakthrough publication, *Drown* (1996), toys with the classification “Haitian” as a racial marker for both Haitians and Dominicans. The narrator of the first story in *Drown*, “Ysrael,” mentions the way his older brother mocked him: “he had about five hundred routines he liked to lay on me.

¹³⁵ This man with no face, this time in the form of a boy, also appears in “Ysrael,” the first story in Díaz’s 1996 *Drown*. The older brother, Rafa, chases after and physically assaults a teenager in the Dominican Republic who wears a facemask to hide his disfigured face. The narrator describes what he sees when the mask is ripped off: “His left ear was a nub and you could see the thick veined slab of his tongue though a hole in his cheek. He had no lips” (18-19).

Most of them had to do with my complexion, my hair, the size of my lips. It's the Haitian, he'd say to his buddies. Hey Señor Haitian, Mami found you on the border and only took you in because she felt sorry for *you*" (5). This same *tíguere* of an older brother who employs the "nickname" Haitian as an insult does not hesitate to engage in sexual relations with Haitian girls, however. The narrator notes, "There was a girl he'd gone to see half-Haitian, but he ended up with her sister" (6). Both these quotes indicate how close the link is between Dominicans and Haitians. The term the narrator's brother, Rafa, uses – "Señor Haitain" – points to the fusion of the two sides of the border, and the description of the narrator's Haitian-like features illuminates the African blood running through the Dominican veins. Even the fact Rafa boasts to his brother about his sexual escapades with a "half-Haitian" is significant, as it exemplifies the continued intermixing of the two sister nationalities, even in the diaspora.

Díaz's more recently published collection of short stories, *This Is How You Lose Her* (2012), is similar to *Oscar Wao* and *Drown* for the author's entertaining and offensive prose. Yunió, one of the narrators from stories in *Drown* and sections of *Oscar Wao*, returns as a seasoned storyteller. All nine stories composing the collection detail past relationships; the majority of these relationships end poorly, male infidelity largely to blame. The story "Invierno" merits mention for its open take on the commonplace whitewashing for Afro Dominicans in the diaspora. Yunió compares himself to his brother Rafa with a focus on his phenotypical traits: "My hair still had enough of the African to condemn me to endless combings and out-of-this-world haircuts" (126). Robbing Yunió the chance of owning or showing pride in his African roots, his father eventually forces him to shave his head. Yunió's bald head is representative of the "pelo

bueno” versus “pelo malo” hair classification typical in the Dominican Republic. Dominican women are notorious for spending hours at the salon to “alisar” or straighten unruly natural hair, seeking the sleek style – albeit temporary – of those with natural “good hair.” Although not reflected in Yuniór’s story, more recently Dominicans in New York – mostly females – have embraced a natural hair movement that aims to empower those who decide to embrace their afro-textured hair. This negation of blackness is repeated throughout the collection, signaling the US diaspora as a heterotopic space where Otherness prevails – a space where immigrants are (dis)placed in situations where they do not and cannot “conform to the norms.” In another story, Yuniór describes a girl Rafa briefly dated: “She was from Trinidad, a cocoa pañyol, and she has this phony-as-hell English accent. It was the way we all were back then. None of us wanted to be niggers. Not for nothing” (39). In addition to a persistent denial of blackness – not directed specifically at Haitians, but succeeding nonetheless in mimicking in the diaspora the racial inconsistencies defined on the island – *This is How You Lose Her* also approaches Hispaniola’s history from a unique, partially removed lens. When Yuniór takes his then girlfriend Magda back to the Dominican Republic, he does not frequent the top tourist attractions in the capital like the Colonial Zone’s Plaza de España or Parque Colón, but instead anchors his tour in the Island’s (dark) history: “This is where Trujillo and his Marine pals slaughtered the gavilleros, here’s where the Jefe used to take his girls, here’s where Balaguer sold his soul to the Devil” (11).

The most obvious allusion to the relation between Dominicans and Haitians in *This is How You Lose Her* appears in the final pages when Yuniór, now a professor at a university in Boston, pursues a Dominican graduate student:

Boston is really racist, you offer by way of orientation.
She looks at you like you're crazy. Boston isn't racist, she says. She also scoffs at
the idea of racism in Santo Domingo.
So Dominicans *love* Haitians now?
That's not about race. She pronounces every syllable. That's about *nationality*.
(192)

This exchange opens the age-old discussion surrounding the difference between race and nationality and attempts to frame the Dominican-Haitian relationship as race-blind.

Torres-Saillant acknowledges that Dominicans, when identifying themselves, tend to highlight their nationality: "Black Dominicans do not see blackness as the central component of their identity but tend to privilege their nationality instead" ("Tribulations" 1090). While saying "I am Dominican" serves as a backhanded way of stating "I am *not* Haitian" without specifically alluding to race, racial elements are inherent in this nationality-enthused identity descriptor. Dominicans' obsession with the *blackness* of Haitians, as opposed to solely their nationality, is made transparent in Díaz's aforementioned 2012 story, "Monstro." The story, set in the future, concerns a fatal disease, accompanied by what is described as "black pustules" or a "black mold-fungus," that originated in Haiti's capital, Port-au-Prince.¹³⁶ The story commences by making reference to Haitians' skin tone: "A disease that could make a Haitian blacker? It was the joke of the year" (1). This discourse surrounding the blackness of Haitians, centered on their physical appearance, is reflective of the way Chucha is described in *García Girls*. Chucha is "blue-black" as opposed to the "café-con-leche" skin tone of many Dominicans. This same manipulation of skin tone descriptors is also present on personal identification cards (*cédulas*) in the Dominican Republic, the category "black" reserved

¹³⁶ Díaz states in an interview with Cressida Leyshon, also published in *The New Yorker*, that "Monstro" encompasses the start to a novel: "The story seems to be growing, turning into something like a novel" (3).

only for those of Haitian descent. Díaz, however, by presenting difficult, racially-charged concepts in his stories in a playful, sarcastic tone, both problematizes and provides an alternative to the stereotypical racial profiling that traditionally occurs in the Dominican Republic and the Dominican diaspora. The diasporic space Díaz's characters cohabit is a racially diverse one where a Dominican American dates Trinidadians, St. Lucians, fellow Dominicans, Haitians, Americans, and others; it is a space that can be described metaphorically as the Dominican *sancocho*, much like Ortiz's Cuban *ajiaco* stew.¹³⁷ Díaz, in his first novel and two short story collections, offers more than – as quoted in *Oscar Wao* – the “mandatory two seconds of Dominican history” (2), instead purposefully searching in his narratives for space to challenge Hispaniola's past. What is “mandatory” is, of course, Díaz's opinion of the necessary components of the Island's history; for him these historical moments take the reader back to the 1937 Massacre and Trujillo era.

“Enemies” on the Island, “Relatives” in Nueva York: Carving a Space for Haitians in Novel and Memoir

Following an analysis of various texts written by the two most widely critiqued Dominican American writers, Alvarez and Díaz, it is also worthwhile to consider how Haitians are represented – or how Dominican identity is re-constructed – in other works. First, I will consider Raquel Cepeda's memoir *Bird of Paradise: How I Became Latina*,

¹³⁷ Ethnologist Fernando Ortiz uses the culinary metaphor *ajiaco* (a typical Cuban stew made of different elements, very similar to the Dominican *sancocho*) to describe the racial, cultural, and social diversity of Cuba; the term bolsters his definition of “transculturation.” See Ortiz's *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*.

followed by a brief analysis of Loida Maritza Pérez's *Geographies of Home*. The first non-academic memoir by a Dominican American in the popular market, Cepeda's recently published memoir can be categorized, similar to *A Wedding in Haiti*, as an "us-memoir." Cepeda seeks to explain her own ancestry, but challenges the understanding of Dominican identity in a global society in the process. The "us" for Cepeda is a collective one, encompassing not only Dominican Americans, but Latino Americans with a desire to trace their origins and forge a connection with their past.

While this chapter's epigraph, a poem by Medrano about the 1937 Massacre, speaks to the Dominican and Dominican American authors' affinity for returning to the past and an inherent inability to untie history from narrative, the poem's nickname for the Dominican Republic – "fantasy island" – mirrors Cepeda's reference to the Island as a "paradise" in her memoir. The utilization of both monikers speaks to a conscious return to the *madre patria*, looking in from the diaspora. Cepeda tells her mother, Roció's, story in an effort to also share her own; "Paraíso" first surfaces as the town in which Roció grew up. When Roció marries the author's abusive, *mujeriego* father without the blessing of her parents, it becomes clear that "Paraíso had turned into everything but paradise for the family" (10). Cepeda's mother immigrates to Nueva York with her new husband and is blinded by wedded bliss, resolving to create her own "paraíso" by cleaning homes of rich Americans and picking up extra factory shifts. For Roció, "Paradise is a state of being, more than just the name of a suburb or a home" (8). Paradise, then, becomes a mirage, an unattainable and unending pursuit of happiness. Medrano, beckoning readers to "come on down/ see the fantasy island," strips the likening of the island to any "fantasy" by recalling its troubled past. In a similar way, Cepeda mocks her mother's

conception of any fantasy or paradise in New York – implying that paradise is *not* being tied to a low-paying job and an abusive husband. Paradise, or the island of fantasy, whether Manhattan or Hispaniola, whether attainable or out of reach, is all-inclusive. On both “islands” Haitians exist in and are an important, integrated part of molding “paradise.” This ironic usage of the term paradise in Cepeda’s memoir is also a reminder of the popular cruise line, Royal Caribbean, taking passengers to a beach in Haiti near the town Labadee without telling them they were porting in Haiti. Instead, the stop was dubbed “a vacationer’s *paradise*.”

Furthering the concept of “nosotros” – the collective pulse of the memoir mentioned in the previous paragraph – is the merging of both Dominicans and Haitians throughout the first part of the text. This alternate, inclusive representation of the Haitian subject is highlighted in the following pages. *Bird of Paradise* is split into two parts. The first relays Cepeda’s coming to terms with her own identity: “a Dominican who was been mistaken for everything but Dominican” (xiv). The second outlines the results of her ancestral DNA test. Both parts, like other works analyzed in this chapter, look to the past to provide answers in the present and for the future. While Cepeda is a Dominican American, and in the title of her memoir self-classifies as “latina,” both parts of the memoir concern her effort to understand her ancestral origins “*before we became Latino*” (xiv). While the results of Cepeda’s DNA test are intriguing – largely for the fact they include a direct link to the Dominican Republic’s indigenous Taíno population – my focus here is on the first part, highlighting three specific aspects of the memoir: Cepeda’s criticism of Dominicans who negate their blackness, the conception of a fluid or

hyphenated identity, and specific examples of Haitians and Haitian Americans forming part of the Dominican American's "nosotros."

Bird of Paradise marks Cepeda's first publication outside of journalism; the author is best known for her journalistic endeavors, including an edited volume titled "And It Don't Stop: The Best American Hip-Hop Journalism of the Last 25 Years" (2004). Cepeda not only confronts what it means to be Latino/a today in her memoir, but also as the current co-host of *Our National Conversation About Conversations About Race* (a podcast formerly known as *About Race* on Slate's Panoply network). Tackling issues of race, class, and identity the podcast is sarcastic, blunt, and powerful, much like *Bird of Paradise*. Cepeda, in fact, recently received an award at the United Nations for her memoir and "for the courage reflected in her literature, her commitment to denouncing violence against women, and for her work in helping young women's empowerment" ("So This Happened Last Night at the United Nations" n.p.).¹³⁸ The idea that Dominicans deny their African roots is perpetuated in the work of Dominican historians, sociologists, and even literary critics, continually pointing to the fact "Dominicans have little familiarity with a discourse of black affirmation" (Torres-Saillant, *Introduction* 24). Cepeda, however, along with others, including renowned Dominican American artist and musician Germán Pérez, challenges this stereotype and criticizes this negation of blackness throughout her memoir.

In *Bird of Paradise*, Cepeda frequently references the anti-black, anti-Haitian ideology with roots long enough to reach the diaspora from the Island and beyond. Her own father, Eduardo, part-Haitian, inspires the most blatant examples of *negrophobia* in

¹³⁸ This quote comes from the author's personal blog.

the text. As a child, the *antihaitianismo* rubs off on Cepeda, too. She remembers her father's brother, Jean, as "a darker-skinned version of Papito and way more sinister. I started thinking that what Dominicans said about *haitianos* was true: Their darker skin did make them more evil" (33). Cepeda's father mocks her, disapproving of her interests, when as a young girl she shares her dream to be a break-dancer and rapper when she grows up. He equates her affinity for rap and hip-hop with all things black, noting: "She *wan's* to be so Black" (60). In a similar sense, Eduardo himself seeks to be anything but black, rejecting all things Afro. His response to the discrimination the Latino/a population faces in New York City – although Cepeda concludes "they" were not sure what exactly they were discriminating against... "white, Black, Native American" (138) – is to find a group against which *he* can discriminate. Cepeda confirms: "Dad began to jump on the anti-Arabic bandwagon though he could easily be mistaken for a Middle Easterner" (139). Toward the end of the first section of the memoir – reflecting on her adult life and no longer susceptible to the racial underpinnings of a family that discouraged her from celebrating or expressing her *dominicanidad* (xv) – Cepeda expresses the desire to see her father, as she did, suffer from an identity crisis: "I wanted him to feel the pain and confusion I did all these years for simply reminding him of what he was, *un dominicano*" (140). Cepeda's categorization of her father as *un dominicano* reflects her decision to (subconsciously) erase the Haitian from her father's identity. The irony in *Bird of Paradise*, then, is that the author *is* black, but she was brought up to deny her Afro roots. Cepeda's confrontation of an anti-black mentality not only questions the roots of such an ideology, but offers a counter-narrative. Through self-writing, Cepeda challenges a one-sided dominant discourse that paints all Dominicans as racist and anti-black; *Bird of*

Paradise stands to prove that as an accompaniment to such racism and antagonism is acceptance and integration for blacks – including Haitians – in a diasporic community that has stereotypically negated its blackness.

Further evidence of Cepeda's father's whitewashing tendencies is his second marriage to Ercilia, a woman described by Cepeda as "a gringa or *something close to one*" (41; my emphasis). The almost-but-not-quite attitude in reference to Ercilia's whiteness points to the fluid, social conception of race in the Dominican community. This sentiment is confirmed by Cepeda's confession: "Ercilia's whiteness is a figment of Papi's imagination" (66). The examples of shifting (racial) identities in *Bird of Paradise* extend well beyond Eduardo and his remarriage. The reality of hyphenated, multiple identities for Latinos/as in the diaspora is highlighted in the epigraphs of various chapters of the memoir, including chapter seven, which begins with a quote from Anzaldúa's *Borderlands*: "Simultaneously, I saw my face from different angles/And my face, like reality, had multiple characters" (87). The idea of the "multiple self" is best expressed by Anzaldúa's *mestiza* consciousness. Anzaldúa asserts: "*la mestiza* is a product of the transfer of cultural and spiritual values of one group to another. Being tricultural, monolingual, bilingual, or multilingual, speaking a patois, and in a state of perpetual transition, the *mestiza* faces the dilemma of the mixed breed" (*Borderlands* 100). In the Dominican Republic, the interplay between the terms "mestizo" and "mulato" is fraught with confusion. While the twentieth-century Dominican census traditionally recorded the majority of the population as "mestizo," oftentimes *mestizo* was used to refer to race and *mulato* to color. The contemporary understanding of the two terms is shifting; Simmons articulates that in the Dominican Republic "*mulataje* is one of the two emerging racial

projects challenging *mestizaje*. It articulates a new racial view and reflects a *negro-blanco* (black-white) mixture with assertions of being *mulato*” (117). In *Bird of Paradise*, Cepeda – just like Anzaldúa’s *mestiza* – “undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war” (100). The memoir is a testament to this transitory but enduring phase of a Dominican American woman caught in the “in-between.”

Furthermore, Cepeda – as she shares her journey to uncover her ancestral origins and personal, familial history – represents an individual Pérez Firmat would consider hyphenated. Cepeda, like Pérez Firmat, is neither “aquí ni allá...having two cultures [she] belongs wholly to neither one” (7). Various moments in the memoir confirm this resistance of classification. Cepeda notes on page 51, after moving permanently to New York City, that instead of Raquel, “Maybe the name Rachel, as unremarkable as it sounds to me, suits me better now.” Likewise, the author points repeatedly to her dual identity. At first she does so with hesitation, wondering about the flight attendants on a plane to the United States, “if any of them are Dominican, like me. Or *Americana*, like me” (42). Later, in college, Cepeda affirms her bi-partite identity with confidence and prowess: “I’m dominiyorkian” (120). Cepeda’s proud self-identification bears resemblance to the overarching premise of Báez’s *Dominicanish*, which she begins by stating “Yo soy una Dominican York” (7). While Cepeda, like Báez, seems to accept the hyphenated identity as “not a minus sign but a plus” (Pérez Firmat 16), she confirms in a podcast recorded by C-SPAN in early 2015 that she is “very comfortable being American and being Latino. For me, that hyphen is not something that separates me, but brings me to both”

(“Conversations About Race” n.p.).¹³⁹ For Cepeda, by labeling her as solely one or the other – focusing on only one side of the hyphen – is an injustice. Singling out “Dominican” or “American” fails to recognize fully that the two national, ethnic markers do not constitute two separate identities, but the fusion of both into one.¹⁴⁰

A discussion surrounding the notion of fluid identity or the “gray spaces” of race in *Bird of Paradise* should also include the emphasized difference(s) between Latinos/as born in New York City and Dominicans who recently landed on US soil, the latter also designated “plátanos” or “campesinos.”¹⁴¹ The true dominicanyorks, as Cepeda and the other Dominican American authors whose works are analyzed in this chapter would be categorized, are considered less “authentic” Dominicans by the new arrivals:

To many of the tens of thousands flooding the city, we’re gringos, fake-ass Dominicans, though they are just a few years away from becoming as American as they perceive us being. In the time in between, the rift between “us” and “them” has become more volatile than standing on a fault line during an earthquake. Many of us born in New York City who feel like we have nothing in common with the *campesinos*, and assume they’ve come straight out of the farms and shantytowns of rural D.R., began choosing sides. (107)

¹³⁹ To view the C-SPAN recording see: <http://www.c-span.org/video/?322848-1/discussion-race-america>

¹⁴⁰ Báez also shares this sentiment, highlighting the duality of the Dominican American identity: “Americanness and Dominicaness can hardly be deemed polar extremes since neither is itself homogeneous. Dominicanish resists and combats rigid definitions of culture” (13).

¹⁴¹ This differentiation between “us” and “them” – read as two different groups of Dominicans in the space of the diaspora is also palpable in Díaz’s *This is How You Lose Her*: “Remember the Spanish chick... Well, turns out she was actually Dominican. Not Dominican like my brother or me but *Dominican* Dominican. As in fresh-off-the-boat-didn’t-have-no-papers-Dominican” (100). Juan Flores approaches the “us” and “them” dichotomy in the Latino community – a community he marks as one of Benedict Anderson’s “imagined communities” – as a constant questioning of who is and who is not Latino/a. He notes, “Beyond the issue of names and labels, and even who is using them, there are differing levels or modes of meaning simultaneously at work in the very act of apprehending and conceptualizing the ‘community’ and ‘identity’ in question” (193-94).

Just as the *campesinos* feel animosity, perhaps jealousy, toward the seemingly more assimilated Dominican Americans in the diaspora, Cepeda claims to speak for her own community of hyphenated subjects when she states we “don’t give a fuck about the plátanos” (107). This trivial rivalry, or misunderstanding, draws a new line between “us” and “them” for Dominicans of the diaspora. This stratification serves to polarize two parties that should, instead, lean on one another for support, especially as the “Americans” are “growing increasingly hostile to [a Dominican] presence. People across the nation are freaking the fuck out” (138). Flores confirms the rising number of Latinos/as in *From Bomba to Hip-Hop*: “Hispanics are the nation’s ‘fastest-growing minority,’ on course to become the ‘largest’ minority at some (variously defined) point early in the coming century” (195). Thus, both established Dominican Americans, those already embracing their “Latino/a” ID, and “plátanos” face discrimination in the diaspora, a discrimination that Haitians face, too. This seemingly unavoidable discrimination results in a “leveling” of sorts for both nationalities of Hispaniola. Sociologist Jorge Duany’s conclusion that Dominicans in Puerto Rico find themselves on the lowest rung of the economic ladder due to their “racialization” as blacks, “Racializing Ethnicity in the Spanish-Speaking Caribbean: A Comparison of Haitians in the Dominican Republic and Dominicans in Puerto Rico,” is a finding that relates to the economic and social situation of Dominicans in the US as well. Just as “American-born Latinos exist in a kind of liminal state” (Cepeda 138), Haitians do, too.

Dominicans finding themselves in the same societal position as Haitians in the United States leads to a reconceptualization of the Dominican-Haitian relationship in the unique space of the diaspora. Thus, instead of viewing the Haitian community for its

deviation from the Dominican one – often the reality on the Island – the diaspora instead often stresses the common denominators between the two groups. Hispaniola is a point of contact and similarity for Dominicans and Haitians in the United States, figuratively erasing the borderline that divides political and social realities on the Island. Not only does Cepeda befriend Haitian Americans, she openly admits to *lo haitiano* running through her veins. Her father’s side is part Haitian, exemplified by brief Kreyól dialogues in the text: “Pou ki-sa, frem?” Papito asks. “Why, brother?” (39). Furthermore, Cepeda’s best friends are Haitian, friendships that result in the author being marked as “less” Dominican. A Haitian comments to her, “I thought you were Puerto Rican and something, or, like, Black and white,” to which she retorts: “What about me isn’t Dominican?” The response to Cepeda’s question is a loaded one: “You’re hanging out with Haitians, for one” (85). Albeit the fact that she associates with Haitians suggests she is “less Dominican,” Cepeda questions her freedom to choose Claudine Jean-Baptiste, whose mother was born in Port-au-Prince (60), as a best friend:

I wonder if we would have been friends had we been living in the D.R. or Haiti. I imagined thousands of friendships disintegrating into the arid Caribbean air – POOF – before they could even begin. Teenagers, separated by an imaginary line, who will never laugh together or share fresh clothes. (84)

Although the comment appears light-hearted, alluding to a teenage innocence, Cepeda’s reference to an “imaginary line” is revelatory. It not only demonstrates how the diaspora is able to re-draw and “soften” borderlines, but it playfully criticizes a political border that prevents friendships, instead forcing them to “[disintegrate] into the arid Caribbean air.” Instead, what disintegrates for Cepeda is the line itself; Haitians are included in the “us” that permeates the memoir. When referencing the “bullshit” Dominicans say about Haitians as a source of embarrassment, Cepeda claims, “It’s part

of the baggage *our* parents and grandparents lug over from the *madre patria*.” (84) “Our” here refers not just to the Dominicans, but to the Haitians, too – each population with its own “baggage” carried over from a Caribbean island split into two nations. The diasporic, possibly generational shift discernible in *Bird of Paradise* stresses not only a fierce disagreement and moral discomfort with the anti-Haitianism at times defining the Dominican community, but it works to dissolve the ideological Border between the two. Just as Anzaldúa’s invisible Borders are written all over her, surging through her veins, as obviated by her challenges to the Mexican American “norms” – from religion and culture to femininity and sexuality – such challenges serve to break down Borders and disband dominant ideologies. “Dominant paradigms, predefined concepts that exist as unquestionable, unchallengeable, are transmitted to us through the culture” (38) are reclaimed by Anzaldúa as she owns her unique personal space and structures her path to “una cultura mestiza.” In a similar way, Cepeda’s memoir opens the possibility for a Dominican-Haitian culture within the US diaspora, challenging the supposed “unchallengeable.”

Pérez’s *Geographies of Home*, like Cepeda’s memoir, openly explores negation(s) of blackness and identity crises – including coming to terms with both sides of a hyphenated identity. This 1999 novel, however, centers its critique of the American dream and the struggle inherent in forming an identity in the diaspora within the family unit. Pérez’s allusion to “home” in the title, then, does not just refer to the physical space where a family gathers, but also an ideological home – a cultural, social home in which an individual feels comfortable in his or her own shoes. “Home” – as a more tangible construct – is a space of perpetual return. Although the protagonist of the novel, Iliana,

dreads returning home, this return also encompasses her best (and arguably only) option, the “right choice.” Angie Cruz’s *Soledad* (2002), similarly focusing a twenty-something Dominican American girl grappling with identity, replicates this complex desire to return home.¹⁴² Narratively construing a complicated understanding of the homeland, Pérez depicts in *Geographies of Home* an alternative reason for migration to the United States centered on “la lucha de una mujer afro-dominicana para asumir su identidad y su familia pobre, proletaria y disfuncional” (Bonilla 201). Myriam J.A. Chancy also confirms Pérez’s willingness to present the sometimes dysfunctional and violent existence of Dominican American families in the United States: “Unlike other well known Dominican writers of her generation...Pérez complicated issues of identity by focusing simultaneously on the racial and sexual dynamics among her characters” (65).

Geographies of Home presents an immigrant Dominican family in Brooklyn, New York undergoing a full-blown crisis. Unable to put down firm roots in the United States, every member of the family struggles with coming to terms with an identity that represents his or her hyphenated status. Each member of the family, in fact, undergoes a unique, distinctive identity negotiation on US soil. The mother, Aurelia, denies her Afro-Dominican spiritual lineage until she eventually comes to terms with her longing for “home.” Iliana, the youngest daughter who will be examined more closely in the following paragraph, represents the only member of the family to opt for identifying with African American culture in the United States. Many of the identity struggles at play in

¹⁴² Soledad, the novel’s namesake, returns home to Washington Heights, even after securing a job at an art gallery and an apartment share in the coveted, hip neighborhood of East Village in New York City. When her family beckons her back to the Dominican-dominated Washington Heights neighborhood, in large part due to her sick mother, Soledad proves unable to refuse her family’s call.

Geographies of Home function in relation to whether the individual exaggerates or downplays his or her “dominicanness.” According to Luis E. Guarnizo, “immigrants’ Dominicanness is utterly exaggerated” as “Dominicans in New York want to be more Dominican than the Dominicans themselves” (80). *Geographies of Home* confirms there are also Dominicans who strive to comport themselves as anything-but-Dominican. Iliana’s sister, Marina, instead rejects all things Dominican – or more specifically, afro-Dominican. Marina’s distaste for blacks is confirmed in the novel: “No flat-nosed, wide-lipped nigger would claim her soul” (17). The psychologically unstable Marina later asks Iliana if she had “hooked herself a gorgeous, blue-eyed hunk yet” (38). This repulsion toward blackness – or negrophobia – surfacing in the novel bears resemblance to the primitivism seen in Trujillo Era novels. When Iliana asks Marina what black men are like, she answers, “They’re lazy as shit and undependable” (38). The perception of blacks as backward does not only come from the inside – a Dominican with afro roots – but also from the outside, as Iliana’s classmates “presumed to know the inner workings of those of her race and class – inferring their inherent laziness, lack of motivation, welfare dependency and intellectual deficiency” (71).

The struggles surrounding the formation of a bi-national identity in *Geographies of Home* do not directly reference an alternate perception of Haitians for Dominicans of the diaspora, but they do reflect a transformed racial consciousness. Iliana’s response to her sister’s question above, for example, is: “Blue-eyed wouldn’t be my first choice” (38), suggesting her decision to associate herself with non-whites in the United States. In the same episode, she challenges her sister’s racial self-identification by asking her, “What color is your skin?” (38). Iliana’s attempt to force the rest of her family to come to

terms with “the idea that Dominicans could benefit by allying themselves with African Americans in the United States” (Simmons 72) is further emphasized in the novel by the fact she is the “blackest” of the fourteen siblings, deemed the “ugly duckling” of sorts. Her brother, Tico, asks: “Since when has Iliana been anything but ugly?” (36). Iliana herself adds: “No one would ever consider her attractive. Not with her baboon nose and nigger lips” (42). In spite of, and perhaps as a result of, Iliana’s features aligning her with a classification of “black” as opposed to or in addition to “Hispanic,” she is the only member of the family successful in identifying herself racially. Her ability to travel outside of racial, cultural, and social borders “allows Iliana the space to further her identity development and forge a new identity distinctly different from her mother and sisters...unlike [them], Iliana successfully carries home on her back and remains centered despite her marginalization within the United States” (Toliver Richardson 20-21). Pérez comments on the intricacies of coming to terms with a bi-cultural identity for Dominicans in the United States, at the same time divulging her inspiration for the title of her novel, stating, “...That is why I chose the title *Geographies of Home*, because what is home when the country you have left behind is no longer home, but then home is still not the country you’ve moved to?” (qtd. in Toliver Richardson 3). Pérez envisions the sense of ultimate displacement experienced by the Dominican migrant as ever-present for the characters in her novel, writing in contrast to the stereotypical American dream.

Geographies of Home is a prime example of the literary construction of a hyphenated identity and bi-national consciousness. Pérez points to the benefits of a character’s association with her *afrodominicanidad* – representing a “proud assertion of blackness” (Torres-Saillant, “Introduction” 54) as a result of membership in the

Dominican diaspora. Although the novel does not explicitly contain an alternate representation of the Haitian subject, its open exploration of an afro-Dominican identity is key to answering the question of who forms a part of the (extended) Dominican family in the diaspora. As Linda Chavez asserts, “Hispanic families tend to differ from many of their contemporary non-Hispanic counterparts. Hispanics are more likely than other Americans to believe that the demands and needs of the family should take precedence over those of the individual” (109). The notion of “family” for diaspora Dominicans, I argue, extends beyond the traditional understanding of the familial unit as it encompasses connections with other off-island Caribbean subjects, all of whom encounter some form of discrimination in the United States. Thus, the physical space of the home opens to groups that may embody the “home” island in the diasporic, non-island arena. This understanding of a racially, culturally evolving “family” in the diaspora supports afro-acceptance and a new relationship with Haitians in the diaspora. *Geographies of Home* purports a revival of blackness as forming an integral part of Dominican identity, but does not specifically mention Dominicans of Haitian descent or reference an alternate relationship with Haitians as a result of a newfound, diasporic racial consciousness that welcomes and even accentuates afro elements. This absence begs the question: Did Pérez consciously refrain from including Haitian references in the novel? In a sense, it is enough that the novel disrupts the power structure known to Dominicans on the Island by fusing Dominicans with other races and nationalities within the unique space of the diaspora. As Alfred Arteaga asserts, the relationship between “Self” and “Other” manifests “active displacements of power, power that must be reinforced continually to maintain a particular image of the world and hierarchy of relationships” (1). Perhaps it is

sufficient that Pérez's novel deconstructs the Dominican understanding of the world, when "the world" is contained within Hispaniola's borders, by creating characters with reformed, increasingly inclusive racial consciousness. If the power of the dominant discourse is displaced, new spaces open for previously marginalized groups within Dominican ideology – including, but not limited to, the Haitian subject.

A Tri-Hyphenation?: Embracing "Haitian" in addition to the "Dominican" and the "American"

Torres-Saillant asserts that "the experience of diasporic uprooting and the sense of living outside the dominant realm of the receiving society penetrate the core of [our] Latino identity" (*Borderless* 141). While the power of the diaspora to uproot Dominicans' previous cultural, racial, and social realities is undeniable, the ability of the diasporic space to transgress multiple borders – both ideological Borders and geographical borders – is highlighted in the Latino/a texts examined in this chapter. The fact that three of the four Dominican American authors whose works are analyzed above are female is not a subjective selection on my part, and the domination of women writers here merits comment. As Victoriano-Martínez correctly states: "En la literatura dominicana de la diáspora son las autoras las que dominan el espacio, tanto en términos de cantidad como de calidad" (101). Joining Alvarez, Cepeda, and Pérez – some of whom have been mentioned previously – are Angie Cruz, Nelly Rosario, Josefina Báez, and Ana-Maurine Lara, to name only a few. These women, then, represent "la verdadera cara de la literatura dominicana que se produce fuera de la isla" (Victoriano-Martínez 101).

Aside from the three to one female to male ratio of the Dominican American authors analyzed, Díaz, Alvarez, Cepeda, and Pérez are united for the ways in which they re-write Hispaniola from a diasporic space, with increased literary freedom and with a will to re-envision the Island's past, reassessing history while at the same time revealing Hispaniola's history for the first time to many US-based readers. Luis E. Guarnizo asserts: "Dominican migrants are a heterogeneous social group that lives in two societies and whose behaviors reflect both U.S. and Dominican cultural influences" (82). Given the literary representation of the process of establishing a bi-national identity for Dominican migrants in this work, there is no doubt that both the United States and the Dominican Republic are integral pieces to such identity puzzles. If Homi Bhabha is correct in asserting that "hybridity is a new cultural and a privileged third space" (10), these Dominican American authors create and problematize – in a literary, fictional setting – this "third" space: a geographical space that is not the Dominican Republic nor the United States, a racial identity that is not Haitian or black nor white or Hispanic, and a national identity that is neither Dominican nor American. The ways in which these Dominican American authors include a bi-national identity construct in their texts, or relate their Dominican-born characters to Haitians or African Americans, highlights the bipartite identities of Dominican migrants in the US diaspora.

Such representations of conflicted, dual identities are often met with criticism. More specifically, various critics have concluded that Alvarez idealizes and racially marks her Haitian characters, molding them into a perfect Haitian stereotype (Bess, Williams, Mitchell). Díaz, too, has been confronted with criticism, many calling him racist and misogynistic, an author who enforces the Dominican stereotypes promulgated

by Trujillo – a golden trio of racism, violence, and misogyny. Both Alvarez and Díaz, too, have dealt with criticism on a more public stage as well, outfacing the negative commentary of not only scholars and literary critics, but politicians, fellow authors, and, more recently, Dominican nationals and intellectuals. The authors, however, affirm their Dominicaness, *and* their Dominican Americanness, refusing to succumb to the Dominican Republic’s racist ideology, still present in a country where blacks and mulattoes make up nearly ninety percent of the population. Torres-Saillant confirms this notable “reticence of Dominicans to brandish their black identity” (“Introduction” 6). At times both Díaz and Alvarez have needed to defend their Dominicaness; Alvarez defending her decision and her right to publish solely in English¹⁴³ and Díaz, who also writes in English, proving his own *dominicanidad* by promoting “another Dominican tradition.”

This alternative “tradition” carves a space for Dominicans, including Díaz, Alvarez, Cepeda, and Pérez, who self-identify as Dominican Americans and members of the Latino/a community. These Dominican American authors have succeeded in rewriting Hispaniola’s history by offering a commiserative and positive vision of Haiti in

¹⁴³ This linguistic duality has proven to be a source of criticism leveled against Alvarez, who elects to write solely in English. A chapter of Alvarez’s autobiography titled “Doña Aída, with Your Permission” responds to an incident of linguistic criticism at a Caribbean Studies Association conference in Santo Domingo. Alvarez, a keynote speaker alongside Dominican Aída Cartagena Portalatín, read in English, while Portalatín, unsurprisingly, presented in Spanish. As the two women met on stage, however, as Alvarez remembers it, “Doña Aída embraced me, but then in front of the mikes, she reamed me out. ‘Eso parece mentira que una dominicana se ponga a escribir en inglés. Vuelve a tu país, vuelve a tu idioma. Tú eres dominicana.’ (‘It doesn’t seem possible that a Dominican should write in English. Come back to your country, to your language. You are a Dominican.’)” (*Something to Declare* 171). Alvarez’s thoughtful response to Doña Aída, also deliberately sarcastic, proves the author’s hyphenated status; she is *not* a Dominican writer, but she also notes, “You’re right, Doña Aída, I’m also not una norteamericana” (173).

their works, but also through fostering a public image that further bolsters what is present in their narratives. For all four authors, Haiti and the Dominican Republic are kindred sisters, two countries that have suffered and prospered together and apart. Thus, although they elect to affirm and defend their Dominicaness, they do not reject their Americanness. They are not Joaquín Balaguer's "subjects of doubtful nationalities," but rather individuals who identify with *two* nationalities, subjects straddling an imaginary boundary line that often leaves them stuck somewhere in the middle.¹⁴⁴ From this unique perspective, the four authors can "see" both countries, the Dominican Republic and Haiti, through a different lens and thus re-write Haiti within not only a Dominican context, but also a diasporic, universal one. Renowned Dominican poet Manuel Rueda offers his own description of *rayano* in his poem "La canción del rayano," reinforcing the plight of border subjects:

Y fue así. Yo dormido. Y alguien trazando sobre mí esa línea,
diciendo, "tú seras dividido siempre".
Un brazo aquí y el otro allá. A mí, al ambidextro,
que hacía arrodillar a un toro mientras acariciaba a una
criatura. (*La criatura* 32)

The authors analyzed in this chapter, however, do not allow this fragmentation or splitting of the halves to result in failure, but instead an uprising, a speaking out, a union of the two parts – a constant and necessary reminder that it takes both parts to make a whole.

It is fitting to end an analysis of Dominican American works with a quote from the beloved Dominican politician and intellectual, Juan Bosch.

¹⁴⁴ Balaguer describes a *rayano* as a "subject of doubtful nationality" (qtd. in Matibag 198).

Me he preguntado cómo es posible amar al propio pueblo y despreciar al ajeno; cómo es posible querer a los hijos de uno al tiempo que se odia a los hijos del vecino, así, sólo porque son hijos de otros. Creo que Uds. no han meditado sobre el derecho de un ser humano, sea haitiano o chino, a vivir con aquel mínimo de bienestar indispensable para que la vida no sea una carga insoportable. (“Carta a tres grandes intelectuales de la época”)

These words are taken from a letter Bosch wrote while in exile in Cuba to fellow Dominican intellectuals in the 1940s. Bosch stressed the importance of the age-old motto, of biblical origin, “love thy neighbor as thyself.” The “neighbor” for Bosch is the Haitian. What is interesting about this quote is the fact Bosch wrote the letter from exile in 1943 – perhaps evidence that a renewed, more positive perspective of the Other often is a consequence of an individual distancing him or herself from the original space where cultural, social, and racial beliefs first originated. In the United States, for example, Dominicans are often relegated to marginal status in society; they become outsiders, foreigners. They are, in this sense, what Haitians are to them in the Dominican Republic. As Gonzalez observes: “New Yorkers tend to mistake them [Dominicans] for blacks who happen to speak Spanish” (117). The fact that Dominicans in the United States begin to associate themselves with the Haitian Other – instead of defining themselves *against* it – is reflected in Dominican American literature, most commonly in the search for identity that materializes in Latino/a literature. Latino/a migrants can influence their communities back “home,” especially in regards to new notions of race. Juan Flores perhaps says it best when noting that (Caribbean) migrants indeed elicit changes in their island societies, upon return (be it temporary or permanent) due to the fact they bring with them “cultural ideas and values acquired in diaspora settings to bear on their native lands...often with boldly innovative and unsettling effect” (4). This chapter’s epigraph, the ending line of Medrano’s poem, “We don’t bury our dead,” holds a dual metaphorical meaning within

the diasporic space. While it can refer to the *fantasma* or shadow of the dictator Trujillo and his constant recurrence in literature – Dominican American literature as well as Dominican literature produced on the Island – it also alludes to familial events that plague the characters portrayed in the texts previously analyzed. Although an allusion to leaving the dead unburied complements the constant return to Hispaniola’s history, as well as the Dominican Americans’ strong tie to family, the Latino/a novels and memoirs examined within this chapter succeed in not only leaving the “dead” unburied, but also digging up the dead, addressing a difficult history that many would rather forget and providing new perspectives related to Dominican-Haitian relations.

CONCLUSION

*[A border is] to be related, without translation, to all the
'trans'-s that are at work here.
Jacques Derrida¹⁴⁵*

The literary confrontation of the hegemonic, dominant campaign of *antihatianismo* in the Dominican Republic serves as a metaphorical re-configuration of the border between the two countries of Hispaniola, allowing for a mutation or negation of the very existence of the *raya* that separates Haiti from the Dominican Republic. Jean-Pierre Boyer, the President of Haiti from 1818-43 and the provocateur behind the 1822-44 Haitian Domination of the Dominican Republic, is often remembered for his unified vision of the Island. Boyer triumphantly proclaimed in 1822 that Hispaniola was united “from Cape Tiburón to Cape Samaná, in possession of one Government” (Wucker 38). While Boyer’s desire to establish Haitian control over Santo Domingo was well-intentioned – with goals including land reform and abolition of the few remaining slaves in the former Spanish colony – he underestimated the differences between Haiti and Santo Domingo. Instead, his drive to recreate Santo Domingo as Haiti’s twin neglected to champion the individuality of both nations or foster camaraderie and solidarity between them. Boyer’s attempt to convert Santo Domingo into “another Haiti” failed; instead, the differences between Haiti and the present Dominican Republic were intensified and further pronounced during this precise time period. Matibag confirms: “The collective memory of the 22-year occupation serves as a historical referent and landmark by which the Dominican national identity sets itself off, politically and psychologically, against the

¹⁴⁵ “Living on Border Lines,” 172.

image of the Haitian Other” (101). Further evidence of the distancing effect of the Haitian Domination is the origin of Dominican Independence Day. February 26, 1844 – the day the Dominican Republic won its independence from Haiti – is recognized and celebrated as Dominican Independence Day, as opposed to the date the former colony Santo Domingo was granted its independence from Spain.

The significance behind the Dominican National Holiday on February 26th is evidence of the politically charged decision of Dominicans to position themselves as non-Haitian and to view the two countries of Hispaniola as separate entities, despite the geography that ties them together. While the literary analyses included in the four chapters of the present dissertation highlight the commonalities and the integrative, contrapuntal relationship between Dominicans and Haitians, the recognition of an alternative understanding of this relationship is *not* synonymous with a wholeness or totality that binds the two countries together as Boyer attempted to do and failed. As Michaelsen and Johnson assert in the introduction to *Border Theory: The Limits of Cultural Politics* any conceptualization of completeness and totality with respect to border spaces is problematic: “If the world begins in completely separate, unlike, anterior cultures, what guarantees or secures the very possibility of wholeness or wellness – completeness and totality?” (13). Although there is no guarantee of “wholeness,” as Boyer learned from experience, literature provides an opportunity for a new expression of the border region, an expression of the frontier that does not confront or clash with the issues of theorizing the border that Michaelsen and Johnson address. Writing the border in fiction, even though the narratives are often rooted in history, allows for a culture of inclusivity to define both geographical borders and ideological Borders present in the

literary texts. Anzaldúa, too, exposes the tensions inherent in theorizing the crossing of a border, focusing on the fact that border subjects are becoming conscious of the *effects* of border crossing and the “multiplicity” of borderlands. In this dissertation, I propose that literature does the same for the reader, making one conscious of not only the action of crossing a border but also of the *seres fronterizos*, *rayanos*, or *nepantler@s* that perform *and* are transformed by the act of crossing.

Dominican Juan Bosch referred to Haiti as an “imperial frontier” in an attempt to categorize the country as a space where empires have clashed both with each other and with local and regional populations. Haiti can also be understood as an “imperial frontier” for its ability to reign in the imaginary of outsiders, (like Carpentier, Zapata Olivella, and Vargas Llosa). Viewing Haiti as a focal point for Latin American literature speaks to a literary imperialism of sorts, the country increasing its prominence and range of influence by captivating outsiders with its history. Moreover, Bosch’s use of “frontier” in his definition of Haiti as an “imperial frontier” can be interpreted in multiple ways since the Haitian frontier belongs also to the Dominican Republic. The dividing line between the two countries that marks this frontier, a line that has at different times in Hispaniola’s history been both shifted and erased, has traditionally disjointed the people living on either side of it. The relation to the Other, however, marks the relationship between Haitians and Dominicans. Stuart Hall’s essay “Who Needs ‘Identity’?” suggests that identity is “constructed within, not outside discourse.” Hall further stresses that identity becomes meaningful “through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called the constitutive outside” (4). In the case of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, the relation to the Other – for Dominicans, the Haitian

Other – is most accentuated at the border. The novels and memoirs examined in this dissertation, however, challenge the border's differential status.

This re-writing of the border is presented through the chronological organization of Chapters Two through Four, spanning from literature written during the Trujillo regime, to post-Trujillo literature, to contemporary Latino/a texts. The inclusion of Chapter One with a focus on Latin American authors' Hispaniola-centered literature establishes that the Haitian-Dominican border is also a transnational one. While this chronological and international approach confirms that the influence of the border expands beyond physical and tangible space, it also speaks to the myriad renderings of the Haitian-Dominican relationship as literary (and historical) re-envisionment.

Upon mentioning the extensive, global scope of this project, there are also new directions the present study can take to further discussion of the manifestations of such resistance. I could expand my analysis, for example, to include musical resistance during and after the *trujillato*; a consideration of Pedro Vergés' *Sólo cenizas hallarás (bolero)* (1980) as well as an analysis of actual *bolero*, *merengue*, and *bachata* lyrics written during the Trujillo regime would help to diversify the re-envisionary approach to the border region and resistance to the dominant discourse during this time frame. Not to mention, in a subsequent project, it would be advantageous to expand the diasporic reach of the study. While there is a significant and growing population of Dominicans in Spain and this constitutes another important Dominican diasporic space in addition to the US, and the (in)-migratory presence of both Haitians and Dominicans in other Caribbean islands such as Cuba and Puerto Rico is also relevant to a discussion of Hispaniola beyond its borders. Crossing into other Hispanic Caribbean spaces to consider further

representation(s) of Haitians and Dominicans would likely include a closer look at Carpentier's journal articles centered on Hispaniola as well as his short stories such as "Semejante a la noche" that portrays colonial Santo Domingo. Puerto Rican writers with a connection to the island of Hispaniola include poet Luis Palés Matos, Cuban-Puerto Rican Mayra Montero, Mayra Santos Febres, and Ana Lydia Vega. Considering Haitian American writers who re-envision the relationship between Haiti and the Dominican Republic, such as Edwidge Danticat (or Haitian Canadian, Myriam J.A. Chancy), would also be a worthwhile addition to this project.

The inclusion of other texts viewing Hispaniola from the outside looking in, as an accompaniment to Chapter Four on Dominican American literature, would help to read the Island as a metaphor for other Caribbean and Latin American countries. The history of a colonial presence, US interventions, occupations, tyrannous dictatorships, and shifting border policies in Haiti and the Dominican Republic both parallel and provide a point of comparison to events that define other Latin American countries. The "double effect" on the island of Hispaniola (the fact the history of one side of the Island both contrasts and compliments the other) intensifies these historical events and their representations in literature. The novels and memoirs considered in the present study share many similarities that respond to the ways in which the texts portray and re-imagine history. Many of the texts are fragmented in organization and utilize myriad narrative voices to tell one, intertwined and multifaceted story. *Changó, el gran putas, La fiesta del chivo, El masacre se pasa a pie, El hombre del acordeón, How the García Girls Lost Their Accents, The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao, and Geographies of Home* all have multiple narrators. The repeated shift in narrative perspective can be understood as

proof that the story of Hispaniola is a communal one. This same fragmentation or chopiness also seeks to define the Haitian-Dominican relationship and the border region. The setting on the Dominican-Haitian border, a sustained interest in the *trujillato* or Haitian Revolution, or a focus on the search for identity that takes place in the diaspora, allows for a representation of the Haitian subject to form part of the core of these novels, as does the choppy, fragmented organization of the works. *El hombre del acordeón* references this disordered aspect: “No se pretende que todo quede tan en orden como debiera ser. Es como hacer una colcha con retazos de diferentes tipos de tela y de colores como las que hacían las abuelas durante los años nebulosos de la infancia” (11). This patchwork metaphor is representative of the overlapping testimonies recalling Honorio Lora’s death, but it is also telling of the border itself and relates to border narrative on a larger scale.

This narrative fragmentation should also be considered for the plurality of voices it engenders. Within the texts analyzed in this project, Dominican Other(s) share their perspectives, including Ramón Vieth in *La vida no tiene nombre*, anonymous Kreyól speakers in *El masacre se pasa a pie*, and vodou gods in *Changó*. Dominican Americans, too, are sometimes classified as “non-Dominican” for their experiences on US soil that distance them from Islanders. The multiple voices re-writing Hispaniola’s history and the relationship between Haitians and Dominicans confront racial and ethnic inconsistencies, and this communitarian perspective – embracing the complexity of the self – is shared by Anzaldúa in her challenge to the Anglo purporting a one-sided, hegemonic narrative: “Admit that Mexico is your double, that she exists in the shadow of this country, that we are irrevocably tied to her. Gringo, accept the doppelganger in your psyche”

(*Borderlands* 86). Not only are there multitudinous narrative voices in many of the works considered in the present project, but character traits often blend and coalesce with one another. Non-Haitians, for example, are given stereotypical Haitian traits that pertain to a primitivist discourse in works such as *Over*, *La vida no tiene nombre*, and *Oscar Wao*. Dominicans and North Americans are presented as thieves, liars, and violent threats to the societies in which they are embedded. An understanding of the ample historical context of Hispaniola, one this dissertation provides, helps the reader to decipher the reasons behind such mixed messages and blending of stereotypes, in large part reflective of censorship during and after the *trujillato*, North American ownership of sugar plantations, and US Interventions.

The novels and memoirs analyzed in the four chapters of this dissertation refuse to let the past disappear or let history establish itself as one-sided. They offer readers new ways of understanding Hispaniola's history, re-writing the Haitian-Dominican relationship – both on and off the Island – and the borderline that physically separates the two countries. A close look at literature written by Dominicans, Dominican Americans, and Latin Americans with a proven interest in Hispaniola's history re-positions both Haiti and the Dominican Republic on a metaphorical *and* physical map of Hispaniola and offers via literary analysis – approached with a critical lens rooted in border studies – a more complex and comprehensive geographic understanding of the Island. This understanding de-emphasizes the border as a cultural, racial/ethnic, and spiritual signifier, (a line of demarcation between “us” and “them”), and instead focuses on points of contact between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. If borders, in the Foucauldian sense, can be invisible and exist anywhere, the alternate perspectives of the Haitian-Dominican

relationship present in the literature considered in this project construct a trans-border subjectivity that binds the two countries of Hispaniola together, proving their past, present, and futures are intertwined.

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